

*Egon*

SCHIELE



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# Egon Schiele



EGON  
SCHIELE



# Contents

His Life	7
His Work	69
Biography	192
Index of Works	194







# His Life

In 1964, Oskar Kokoschka evaluated the first great Schiele Exhibition in London as “pornographic”. In the age of discovery of modern art and the loss of “subject”, Schiele responded that for him there existed no modernity, but only the “eternal”. Schiele’s world shrank into portraits of the body, locally and temporally non-committal. Self-discovery is expressed in an unrelenting revelation of himself as well as of his models. The German art encyclopaedia, compiled by Thieme and Becker, described Schiele as an eroticist because Schiele’s art is an erotic portrayal of the human body. Furthermore, Schiele studied both male and female bodies. His models express an incredible freedom with respect to their own sexuality, self-love, homosexuality or voyeurism, as well as skilfully seducing the viewer.

For Schiele, the clichéd ideas of feminine beauty did not interest him. He knew that the urge to look is interconnected with the mechanisms of disgust and allure. The body contains the power of sex and death within itself. A photograph of Schiele on his deathbed depicts the twenty-eight-year-old looking asleep, his gaunt body completely emaciated, his head resting on his bent arm; the similarity to his drawings is astounding. Because of the danger of infection, his last visitors were able to communicate with the Spanish flu-infected Schiele only by way of a mirror, which was set up on the threshold between his room and the parlour.

During the same year, 1918, Schiele had designed a mausoleum for himself and his wife. Did he know, he who had so often distinguished himself as a person of foresight, of his nearing death? Did his individual fate fuse collectively with the fall of the old system, that of the Habsburg Empire? Schiele’s productive life scarcely extended beyond ten years, yet during this time he produced 334 oil paintings and 2,503 drawings. He painted portraits and still lifes of land and townscapes; however, he became famous for his draftsmanship. While Sigmund Freud exposed the repressed pleasure principles of upper-class Viennese society, which put its women into corsets and bulging gowns and granted them solely a role as future mothers, Schiele bares his models. His nude studies penetrate brutally into the privacy of his models and finally confront the viewer with his or her own sexuality.

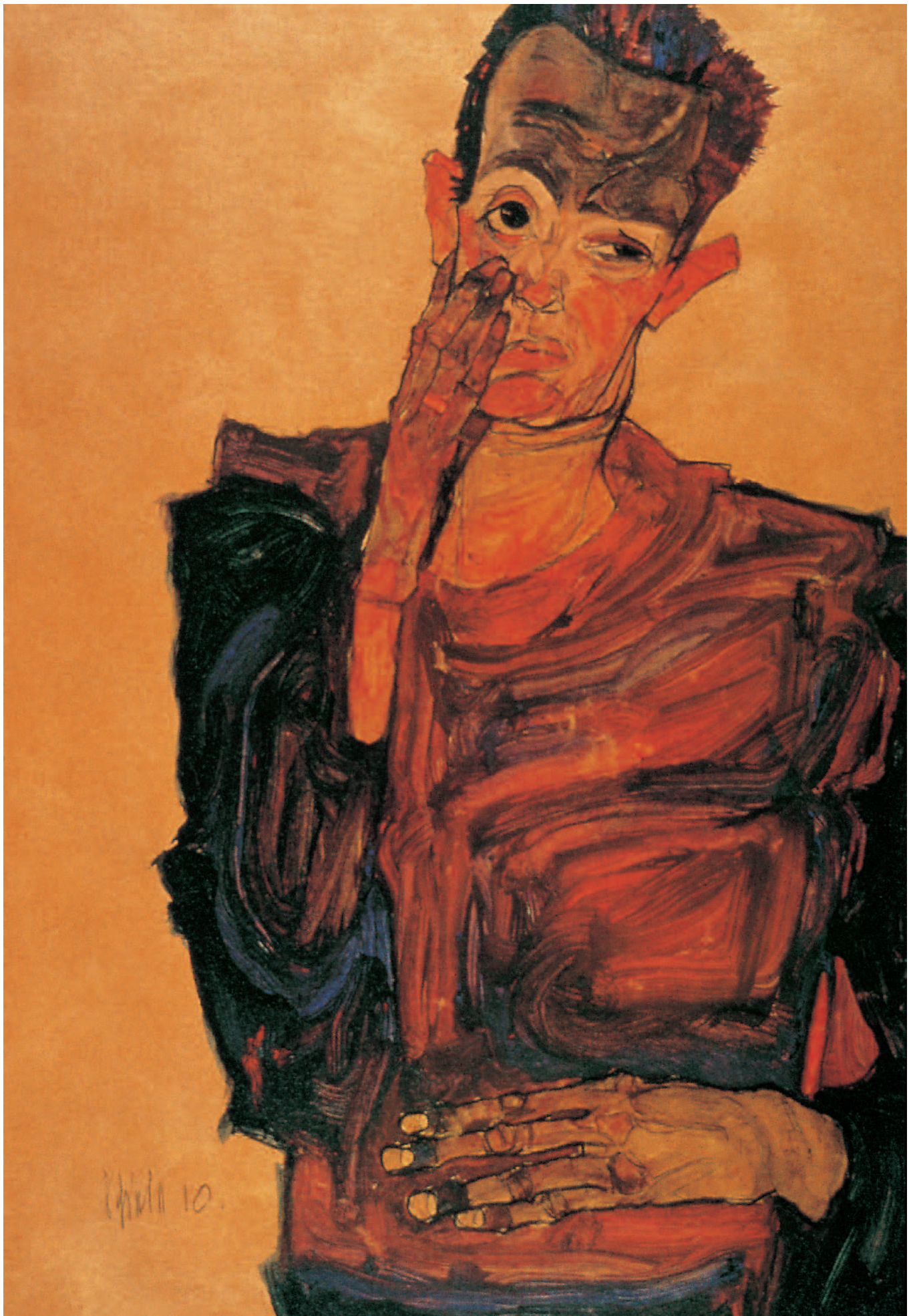
## Schiele’s Childhood

In modern industrial times, with the noise of racing steam engines and factories and the human masses working in them, Egon Schiele was born in the railway station hall of Tulln, a small, lower Austrian town on the Danube on 12 June 1890. After his older sisters Melanie (1886-1974) and Elvira (1883-1893), he was the third child of the railway

*Egon Schiele, 1914.*  
Photo.

*Self-Portrait with Hand to Cheek, 1910.*  
Gouache, watercolour and charcoal,  
44.3 x 30.5 cm.  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina,  
Vienna. (p. 8)

*Self-Portrait with Black Clay Vase and Spread Fingers, 1911.*  
Oil on canvas, 27.5 x 34 cm.  
Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien,  
Vienna. (p. 9)







director Adolf Eugen (1850-1905) and his wife Marie (born Soukoup) (1862-1935). The shadows of three male stillbirths were a precursor for the only boy, who in his third year of life would lose his ten-year-old sister Elvira. The high infant mortality rate was the lot of former times, a fate that Schiele's later work and his pictures of women would characterise. In 1900, he attended the grammar school in Krems. But he was a poor pupil who constantly took refuge in his drawings, which his enraged father burned.

In 1902, Schiele's father sent his son to the regional grammar and upper secondary school in Klosterneuburg. The young Schiele had a difficult childhood marked by his father's ill health. He suffered from syphilis, which, according to family chronicles, he is said to have contracted while on his honeymoon as a result of a visit to a bordello in Triest. His wife fled from the bedroom during the wedding night and the marriage was only consummated on the fourth day, on which he infected her also. Despair characterised Schiele's father, who retired early and sat at home dressed in his service uniform in a state of mental confusion. In the summer of 1904, stricken by increasing paralysis, he tried to throw himself out of a window. He finally died after a long period of suffering on New Year's Day 1905. The father, who during a fit of insanity burned all his railroad stocks, left his wife and children destitute. An uncle, Leopold Czihaczec, chief inspector of the imperial and royal railway, assumed joint custody of the fifteen-year-old Egon, for whom he planned the traditional family role of railroad worker. During this time, young Schiele wore second-hand clothing handed down from his uncle and stiff white collars made from paper. It seems that Schiele had been very close to his father for he, too, had possessed a certain talent for drawing, had collected butterflies and minerals and was drawn to the natural world.

Years later, Schiele wrote to his sister: "I have, in fact, experienced a beautiful spiritual occurrence today, I was awake, yet spellbound by a ghost who presented himself to me in a dream before waking, so long as he spoke with me, I was rigid and speechless." Unable to accept the death of his father, Schiele let him rise again in visions. He reported that his father had been with him and spoken to him at length. In contrast, distance and misunderstanding characterised his relationship with his mother who, living in dire financial straits, expected her son to support her; instead, the older sister would work for the railroad.

However, Schiele, who had been pampered by women in his childhood, claimed to be "an eternal child". By a stroke of fate, the painter Karl Ludwig Strauch (1875-1959) instructed the gifted youth in draftsmanship; the artist Max Kahrer of Klosterneuburg looked after the boy as well. In 1906, at the age of only sixteen, Schiele passed the entrance examination for the general art class at the Academy of Visual Arts in Vienna on his first attempt. Even the strict uncle, in whose household Schiele now took his midday meals, sent a telegram to Schiele's mother: "Passed".

## The Favourite Sister, Gerti

The nude study of the fiery redhead with the small belly, fleshy bosom and tousled pubic hair is his younger sister Gertrude (1894-1981). In another watercolour,

*Self-Portrait*, 1912.  
Pencil, watercolours and gouache,  
46.5 x 31.5 cm.  
Private collection.

*The Truth Unveiled*, 1913.  
Gouache, watercolour and pencil,  
48.3 x 32.1 cm.  
Private collection. (p. 12)

*Self-Portrait*, 1910.  
Gouache, watercolour and black  
crayon, 44.3 x 30.6 cm.  
Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum,  
Vienna. (p. 13)





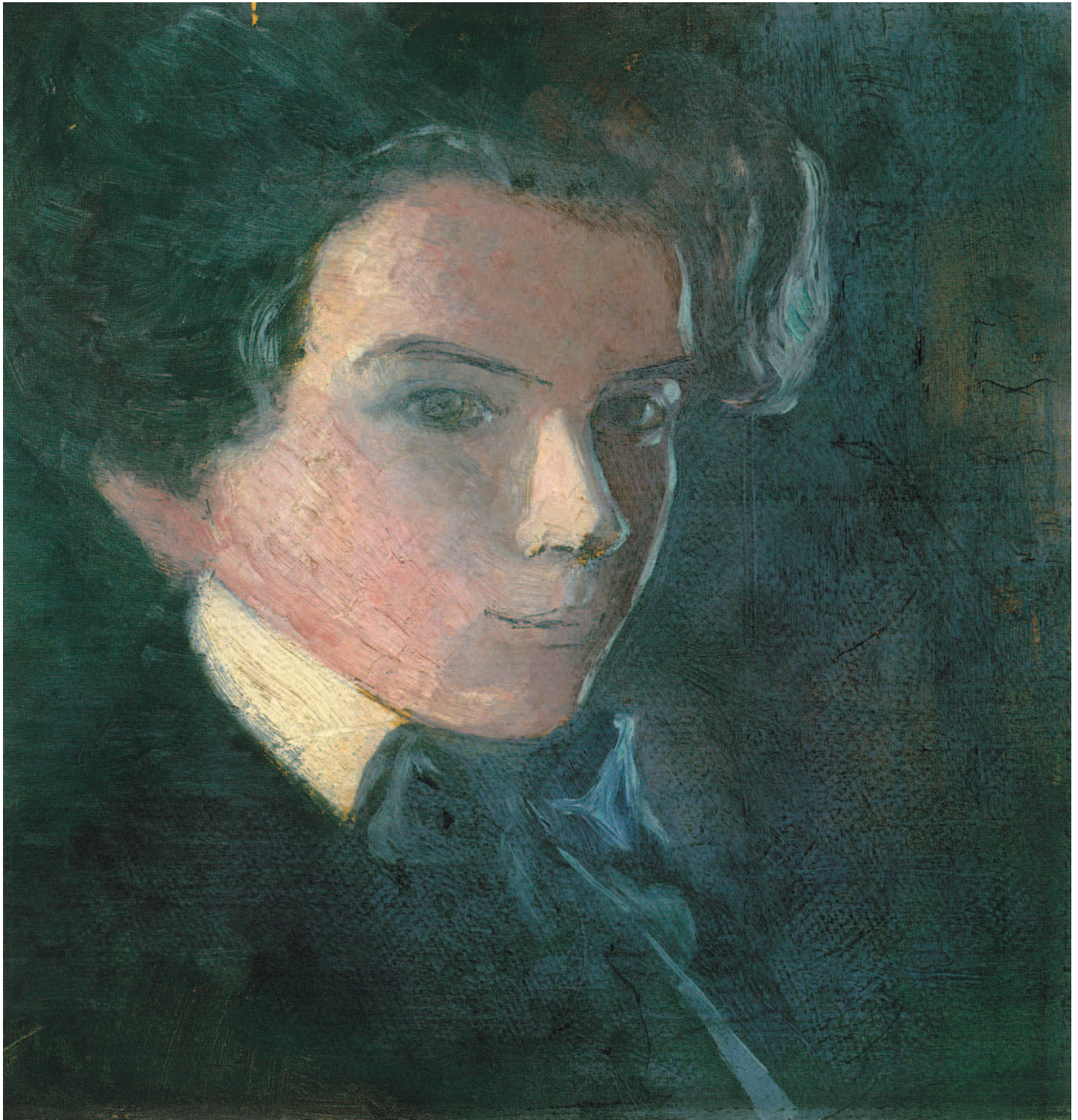














Gerti reclines backwards, still fully clothed with black stockings and shoes, and lifts the black hem of her dress from under which the red orifice of her body appears. Schiele draws no bed, no chair, only the provocative gesture of his sister's body offering itself. Incestuous fantasies? The sister, four years his junior, was a compliant subject for him.

At the same time as Sigmund Freud discovered that self-discovery occurs by way of erotic experiences, and "the urge to look" emerges as a spontaneous sexual expression within the child, young Egon recorded confrontations with the opposite sex on paper. He incorporated erotic games of discovery and shows an unabashed interest in the genitalia of his model into his nude studies. The forbidden gaze, searching for the opened female vagina beneath the rustling of the skirt hem and white lace. Gerti; with her freckled skin, green eyes and red hair, is the prototype of all the later women and models of Schiele.

## Vienna at the Turn of the Century

Vienna was the capital city of the Habsburg Empire, a state of multiple ethnicities consisting of twelve nations with a population of approximately thirty million. Emperor Franz Josef maintained strict Spanish court etiquette. Yet, on the government's fortieth anniversary, he began a large-scale conversion of the city and its approximately 850 public and private monumental structures and buildings. At this time, the influx of the rural population coming to the big city was increasing. Simultaneously, increasing industrialisation resulted in the emergence of a proletariat in the suburbs, while the newly rich bourgeoisie settled in and around the exclusive Ringstrasse. In the writers' cafés, Leon Trotsky, Lenin and later Hitler, consulted periodicals on display and brooded over the future of the new century.

Just how musty the artistic climate in Vienna was is evidenced by the scandal over Engelhard's picture *Young Girl under a Cherry Tree*, in 1893. The painting was repudiated on the grounds of "respect for the genteel female audience, which one does not wish to embarrass so painfully vis-à-vis such an open-hearted naturalistic study". What hypocrisy, when official exhibitions of nude studies, the obligation of every artist, had long been an institution. In 1897, Klimt, together with his fellow Viennese artists, founded the Vienna Secession, a splinter group aiming to separate itself from the officially accepted conduct for artists with the motto: "To the times its art, to the art its freedom".

In 1898, the first exhibition took place in a building belonging to the horticultural society. It was distinguished from the usual exhibitions, which normally included several thousand works, by offering an elite selection of 100 to 200 works of art. The proceeds generated by the attendance of approximately 100,000 visitors financed a new gallery designed by the architect Olbrich. Exhibitions by Rodin, Kollwitz, Hodler, Manet, Monet, Renoir, Cézanne and Van Gogh opened the doors to the most up-to-date international art world. Visual artists worked beside renowned writers and musicians such as Rilke,

*Self-Portrait, Facing Right*, 1907.  
Oil on cardboard, 32.4 x 31.2 cm.  
Private collection.

*Nude Self-Portrait, Grimacing*, 1910.  
Pencil, watercolours and gouache,  
55.8 x 36.9 cm.  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina,  
Vienna. (p. 16)

*Standing Male Nude with Red Loincloth*, 1914.  
Pencil, watercolour and gouache,  
48 x 32 cm.  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina,  
Vienna. (p. 17)







Schnitzler, Alternberg, Schönberg and Alban Berg for the periodical *Ver Sacrum*. Here they developed the idea of the complete work of art, which encompassed all artistic areas. Simultaneously, the Secession required the abolition of the distinction between higher and lower art, art for the rich and art for the poor, and declared art common property. Yet, this demand of the art nouveau generation remained a privilege of the upper class striving for the ideal that 'art is a lifestyle', which encompassed architectural style, interior design, clothing and jewellery.

## Gustav Klimt, the Father Figure

In 1907, Schiele made the acquaintance of Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), who became his father figure and generously supported the talent of the young genius for the rest of his life. They exchanged drawings with one another and Klimt even modelled for Schiele. In his career, Klimt profited from the large volume of commissioned work, such as the 34.14-metre-long *Beethovenfries* created for the faculty. Nevertheless, he ran into misunderstanding about the central motif of a nude couple embracing from his contemporaries. Criticism of Klimt became more vehement when the periodical *Ver Sacrum* published his drawings and was confiscated by a public prosecutor because "the depiction of the nude grossly violated modesty and, therefore, offended the public". Klimt answered that he wanted nothing to do with stubborn people. What was decisive for him was whom it was meant to please. For Klimt, who was supported by private patronage, this meant his clientele of Viennese middle-class patrons.

## Schiele's Models

Unlike Klimt, Schiele found his models on the streets: young girls of the proletariat and prostitutes; he preferred the child-woman androgynous types. The thin, gaunt bodies of his models characterised lower-class status, while the full-bosomed, luscious ladies of the bourgeoisie expressed their class through well-fed corpulence. Yet, the attitude of the legendary Empress Sissi is symptomatic of a time in which the conventional image of women began to change. She indeed bore the desired offspring, however, she rebelled against the maternal role expected of her. The ideal of a youthful figure nearly caused her to become anorexic. At the same time, she shocked Viennese court society not only with her unconventional riding excursions, but also in that she wore her clothing without the prescribed stockings.

Around the time of the *fin de siècle*, Schiele portrayed young working class girls. The number of prostitutes in Vienna was among the highest per capita of any European city. Working-class women were where upper-class gentlemen found the defenceless objects of their desire, which they did not find in their own wives. The young, gaunt bodies in Schiele's nude drawings almost stir pity; red blotches cover their thin skin and skeleton-like hands. Their bodies are tensed; however, the red

*Boy in Sailor Suit*, 1914.  
Gouache, watercolour, coloured  
crayon and pencil, 47.8 x 31.2 cm.  
Private collection.

*The Brother*, 1911.  
Gouache, watercolour and pencil  
with white highlighting,  
44.7 x 30.4 cm.  
Private collection. (p. 20)

*Portrait of Gerti Schiele*, 1909.  
Oil, silver, gold-bronze paint and  
pencil on canvas, 140.5 x 140 cm.  
The Museum of Modern Art,  
New York. (p. 21)

















*Self-Portrait with Arms Thrust  
Backwards*, 1915.  
Gouache, pastel and charcoal,  
32.9 x 44.8 cm.  
E.W. Kornfeld collection.





*The Artist's Mother, Sleeping*, 1911.  
Pencil, watercolour with white  
highlighting, 45 x 31.6 cm.  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina,  
Vienna.













genitalia are full and voracious. Like little animals, they lie in wait for the lustful gaze of the beholder. Despite their young age, Schiele's models are aware of their own erotic radiance and know how to skilfully pose. The masturbating gesture of the hand on the vagina accompanies the provocative gaze of the model. Contrary to the hygienic taboos of the upper class, for example, not to linger overly long while washing the lower body and not to allow oneself to be viewed in the nude, Schiele's drawings testify to a simple body consciousness and a matter-of-fact attitude. For the lower levels of society, "love for sale" pertained to earning one's daily bread. Outraged, the Viennese public lashed out at Schiele, stating that he painted the ultimate vice and utmost depravation, while he confronted both male and female spectators with their own, hypocritical sexuality. In a letter he wrote: "Doing an awful lot of advertising with my prohibited drawings" and went on to cite five notable newspapers that referred to him. Were his nude drawings but a sales strategy that helped draw attention to himself?

Klimt's picture of women is based on the analogy of the female body as a personification of nature. Curled tresses become stylised plant formations and the wave-like silhouette melts into a consecrated atmosphere. Schiele, however, broke with the beautiful cult of organic art nouveau and ornamental art. It is here, where Klimt offended the authorities in various episodes, namely in violating modesty, that Schiele found his main objective. He stripped his models of every decorative accessory and concentrated solely on their bodies. Yet, in contrast to the academic nude drawings, which mainly limited themselves to a neutral portrayal of anatomy, Schiele showed erotically aroused bodies. He knew of the erogenous function that charms the eye and set erotic signals with red painted lips, fleshy labia and dark moon circles under the eyes. The *Observed in a Dream* even opens her vulva (p. 113).

## Expressive Art Process

Drawings served Klimt as preliminary studies for his paintings. In contrast, Schiele signs his watercolour sketches as finalised works of art. It is precisely the sketch-like, unfinished product that characterised Schiele, who unfolded the art process even in his oil paintings. In contrast to the ornamental surface decoration in art nouveau painting, his sharp line executions and jagged aggressive style suggest the artist's subjective guiding hand.

## Encounter with the Mirrored Image

The contour line captures the physical presence and becomes a sculpture-like containment within space. Thereby Schiele dispensed with every spatiotemporal specification. Like a person regarding himself in a mirror, only seeing his face and body, and like a lover who within the body of his love, forgets the world around him,

*Red Nude, Pregnant*, 1910.  
Watercolour and charcoal,  
44.5 x 31 cm.  
Private collection. (p. 24)

*Portrait of a Woman (Valerie Neuzil)*,  
1912.  
Gouache and pencil on paper,  
24.8 x 24.8 cm.  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina,  
Vienna. (p. 25)

*Wally in Red Blouse with Raised Knees*,  
1913.  
Watercolour, pencil and gouache,  
31.8 x 48 cm.  
Private collection.



Schiele created his self-portraits before a mirror, as well as some of his female nude drawings. *Schiele, Drawing a Nude Model in front of a Mirror* illustrates this (p. 85). The scene is illuminating, the duplication of frontal and rear views of the nude woman are revealed in the reflection, however there, where the mirror is, stands the viewer. He functions as the mirror in which the model regards herself, reassuring herself of her body, and in whose gaze it moves. The intimacy between painter and model is countered in the relationship between viewer and drawing.

## First Exhibitions

In 1908, Schiele took part in a public exhibition in the Imperial Hall of the Klosterneuburg Monastery for the first time. He exhibited small-scale landscapes that he had painted from summer through to the autumn (pp. 36, 37). According to Jane Kallir, around the end of 1908, Schiele had painted nearly half of all the oil paintings of his lifetime. It was only in 1909 that Schiele's artistic creativity reached a great turning point.

*The Dancer Moa, 1911.*  
Pencil, 48 x 31.8 cm.  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina,  
Vienna.





*Nude on Her Stomach*, 1917.  
Gouache and black crayon,  
29.8 x 46.1 cm.  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina,  
Vienna.







He left the academy and the reactionary professor Christian Griepenkerl, together with Anton Peschka, Albert Paris von Gütersloh, Anton Faistauer, Sebastian Isepp, Franz Wiegele and others, established the "New Art Group" (Neukunstgruppe). The theme of the new artists was 'opposition'.

Schiele's retreat from the subjective experience of the individual was a counter-reaction to Viennese historicism and its prince of painters, Hans Makart, who was celebrated by the government. Schiele distanced himself from their allegoric compositions. He turned Catholicism's conventional values upside down and placed them in the service of sexuality. His strategy: he wanted to shock. In the painting provocatively titled *The Red Host*, Schiele reclines on his back in an orange shirt with his abdomen bared, his spread legs suggesting the feminine gesture of submission, while before him, gazing at the viewer, a nude strawberry-blond holds his enormous phallus.

In other paintings, monks make love to nuns and expectant women, who were often unwelcome and repudiated by strict Viennese society an example being, *The Nun Prays Chafed and Nude before 'Christ's Agony on the Cross'*. Furthermore, Schiele painted homosexual couples, transgressing taboos and provoking the fantasies of his contemporary viewers. In turn, Schiele found acknowledgement at the international art show in Vienna where he was represented by four paintings next to the expressionist works of Vincent van Gogh, Edvard Munch and Oskar Kokoschka. He made the acquaintance of Josef Hoffman, the director of the Vienna workshop. In December of 1909, the first exhibition of the "New Art Group" took place at Pisko's fine art dealership.

## Vienna Art Scene

By 1909, thus relatively early, Schiele had made the acquaintance of decisive personalities of the Viennese art scene, whose portraits he painted and who were to remain loyal to him for his entire life and beyond. Schiele befriended Arthur Roessler, writer and art critic, who became one of his most decisive friends and promoters. Other figures who influenced his career were Eduard Kosmack, the publisher of the magazines *The Architect* and *The Interior*; Carl Reininghausen (1857-1929), one of the most important Viennese collectors; and the railroad official and Schiele collector Heinrich Benesch (1862-1947), who later dedicated a book to Schiele.

## Schiele's Close Circle of Friends

Perhaps because Schiele opposed the plans of his uncle who would have liked to persuade his ward to enter military service, Czihaczec withdrew his guardianship in 1910. During the same period, the incident with the mysterious lover occurred, of which, with the exception of an exchange of letters with the gynaecologist, Erwin von Graff, who assured Schiele that he had admitted her to his clinic and was attending to

*Portrait of Arthur Roessler*, 1910.  
Graphite on paper, 24.2 x 32 cm.  
Private collection.

*Self-Portrait with Lavender Shirt and Dark Suit, Standing*, 1914.  
Pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper, 48.4 x 32.2 cm.  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna. (p. 32)

*Self-Portrait, Nude*, 1910.  
Gouache, watercolour, black crayon and white highlighting, 44.9 x 31.3 cm.  
Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna. (p. 33)







her, nothing is known. Schiele dealt with this incident in several paintings: *Birth of the Genius* and *The Dead Mother* (p. 82). He painted a foetus, which, still in its mother's womb, stares at the viewer.

During this time, studies in love and death went hand-in-hand. On the one hand, the sexual act is associated with the danger of pregnancy and the possibility of dying in childbirth. The life-giving body may be destroyed by death. On the other hand, syphilis lurked in every kiss. Is it possible to explain the subliminal, morbid trait in Schiele's world? In the cult book of that time, *Sex and Character* by the author Otto Weninger, the role of the woman was limited solely to her biological function of childbearing. Weninger commented that men of significance should only get involved with prostitutes, whereas Freud posed that their upbringing denies women the ability to deal on an intellectual level with sexual problems, which is where they have the greatest need for knowledge, yet society reacts with condemnation of this desire for knowledge as unfeminine and as a sign of a sinful predisposition.

Freud attributed the alleged intellectual inferiority of women to sexual repression, which resulted in the inhibition of thought.

Accompanied by his friend, the painter and mime Erwin Osen, Schiele fled to Krumau where they spent the summer with a dancer named Moa (pp. 28, 109, 110), the lover of Osen. There, Schiele also made the acquaintance of the young baccalaureate Willy Lidl, who avowed his deep love for him. Back in Vienna, Schiele shared his atelier with Max Oppenheimer (1885-1954). Day in, day out, he lived from hand to mouth. Even if young Schiele lamented his financial woes, he quickly managed to get on his feet again and find support from friends and patrons. Then, in 1910, Weiner Werkstatte, established in 1903, printed three of Schiele's picture cards; at the same time one of his paintings was shown at the International Hunters' Exhibition in the context of the Klimt group. A further exhibition at the Klosterneuburg monastery exhibited the *Portrait of Eduard Kosmack* and that of a boy, *Rainerbub*, son of the Viennese orthopaedist and surgeon Max Rainer (1910). As early as 1911, the first monograph on Schiele, penned by the artist and poet Albert Paris von Gütersloh, was published. In the same year, Arthur Roessler reviewed Schiele's works in the monthly periodical *Bildende Künstler*. In Vienna, Schiele took part in the collective exhibition at the Miethke Gallery.

## Wally, His First Love

Once again, Schiele wanted to get away. "Vienna is full of shadows, the city is black. I want to be alone [in] the Bohemian Woods, that I need not hear anything about myself," he wrote in his diary. Wally (Valerie Neuzil), former model and lover of Klimt who supposedly gave herself to Schiele, accompanied him. They moved to his mother's hometown in Krumau on the Moldau. The devoted Lidl had procured an atelier with a garden. A very productive working phase began for Schiele. Besides a few landscapes, he mainly worked on nude studies of himself and Wally, his

*Standing Nude Girl*, 1918.  
Black crayon on paper,  
45.7 x 29.5 cm.  
Private collection, New York.









*Landscape in Lower Austria, 1907.*  
Oil on cardboard, 17.5 x 22.5 cm.  
Private collection.





*Village with Mountains*, 1907.  
Oil on paper, 21.7 x 28 cm.  
Private collection.























“twittering lark”. Like the diary drawings, numerous studies depict the erotic cohabitation of two bodies.

## Self-Portrait as Nude Study

There are approximately 100 self-portraits including several nude studies of Schiele (p. 33). Study of the male nude was obligatory at the academy, psychological self-portraits, however, apart from Richard Gerstl in 1908, were an exception. The self-portrait as nude study positions the artist not only as a person of insight, but also in his physical being. Schiele did not act as a voyeur in baring his models, rather, he brought himself into play. The nude study depicting a rigid member in the act of masturbation went a step further and shows he was a man fascinated by his own sexuality. This reversal in passivity accompanies the setting of a new goal: to be looked at. The urge to look is indeed autoerotic from the beginning; it surely has an object but finds it in its own body. In turn, showing the genitals is well known as an apotropaic action. Accordingly, Freud interprets “the showing of the penis and all its surrogates” as the following statement: “I am not afraid of you, I defy you.”

## Schiele, the Man of Pain

The discrepancy between Schiele’s external appearance and his repulsively ugly self-portraits is astonishing. Gütersloh described Schiele as “exceptionally handsome”, of well-maintained appearance, “someone who never had even a day-old beard”, an elegant young man, whose good manners contrasted strangely with his reputedly unpalatable manner of painting. Schiele, on the other hand, painted himself with a long high forehead, wide-opened eyes deep in their sockets and a tortured expression, an emaciated body, which he sometimes mutilated up to its trunk, with spider-like limbs. The bony hands tell of death at work. His body reflects the sallow colours of decay. In many places, he painted himself with a skull-like face. Schiele admitted in a verse: “everything is living dead”. Just as Kokoschka maintained, Schiele soliloquized with death, his counterpart. Trakl wrote of Schiele, “and surrounded by the flattery of decay, he lowers his infected lids.”

At the same time, Schiele perceived himself as a man of pain: “That I am true I only say, because I [...] sacrifice myself and must live a martyr-like existence.” If contemporary art banished religious themes from its field of vision, the artist now incarnated these himself. In a letter to Roessler, the Christ-likeness becomes clearer still: “I sacrificed for others, for those on whom I took pity, those who were far away or did not see me, the seer.” His fate as an outsider led to the ideal of the artist as world redeemer. In the programme of the New Artists he explains: “Fellow men feel their results, today in exhibitions. The exhibition is indispensable today [...] the great experience in the existence of the artist’s individuality.” For him, however, this no longer concerned

*Pregnant Woman and Death  
(Mother and Death)*, 1911.

Oil on canvas, 100.3 x 100.1 cm.  
Národní Galerie, Prague. (p. 38)

*Grimacing Man (Self-Portrait)*, 1910.  
Charcoal and watercolour on paper,  
44 x 27.8 cm.

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum,  
Vienna. (p. 39)

*Self-Portrait with Lowered Head*  
(study for *The Hermits*), 1912.

Oil on wood, 42.2 x 33.7 cm.  
Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum,  
Vienna. (p. 40)

*The Hermits*, 1912.

Oil on canvas, 181 x 181 cm.  
Leopold Museum, Vienna. (p. 41)

*Two Girls Embracing (Friends)*, 1915.

Gouache, watercolour and pencil,  
48 x 32.7 cm.  
Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest.



*Reclining Nude with Black Stockings,*  
1911.  
Watercolour and pencil,  
22.9 x 43.5 cm.  
Private collection.

*Preacher,* 1913.  
Gouache, watercolour and pencil,  
47 x 30.8 cm.  
Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum,  
Vienna.























illustration, rather it was a representation of his soul's inner life. The nude study is a revealing study. Thereby, the work in its expressive self-staging becomes a study of his life.

## Fascination with Death

The Viennese at the turn of the century lived with a longing for death and romanticised the "beautiful corpse". "How ill everything coming into being does seem to be," wrote Trakl, who in 1914 found death on the front. Schiele shared with Osen, who had himself locked away in a Steinhof insane asylum where he might study the behaviour of the patients, an interest in pathologic pictures of disease. In the clinic of the gynaecologist Erwin von Graf, he studied and drew sick and pregnant women and pictures of new and stillborn infants. Schiele was fascinated by the devastation of the foul suffering, to which these innocents were exposed. Astonished, he saw unusual changes in the skin in whose sagging vessels thin, watery blood and tainted fluids trickled sluggishly, he marvelled also at light-sensitive green eyes behind red lids, the slimy mouths and the soul in these unsound vessels, reported Roessler. Therein he resembled Oskar Kokoschka, also known as the "soul slasher" and of whom it was said "painting hand and head, he lay bare in a ghostly manner the spiritual skeleton of her whom he portrayed". To the colour lithograph of his drama, *Murder Hope of Women*, he commented: "The man is bloody red, the colour of life, but he lies dead in the lap of a woman, who is white, the colour of death." Man and woman in the dance of life and death.

*The Dancer*, 1913.  
Pencil, watercolour and gouache,  
48 x 32 cm.  
Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum,  
Vienna. (p. 46)

*Seated Female Nude*, 1914.  
Gouache and pencil, 46.4 x 31.7 cm.  
Private collection. (p. 47)

*Seated Girl*, 1914.  
Pencil on paper, 43 x 30 cm.  
Staatliche Graphische Sammlung,  
Munich. (p. 48)

*Standing Girl in Blue Dress and Green  
Stockings, Back View*, 1913.  
Watercolour and pencil, 47 x 31 cm.  
Private collection. (p. 49)

*Reclining Woman*, 1917.  
Oil on canvas, 95.5 x 171 cm.  
Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum,  
Vienna.

## Phantom-Like Creatures

With a few lines, Schiele sketched the outlines of the body on paper. A thigh is reduced to two lines. The stroke is dynamic, grows fainter, following the structural ductility of a fast thrown-in movement. Jagged, with hard angles he loves the bone structure. Schiele's strokes are like calligraphy, which captures the body's expression in just a few lines. In contrast to the reluctant, bony aspect of the shoulders and pelvis is the round diffraction of the chest. Orange nipples and vulva become wounds. The physiognomy of his models, however, remains anonymously phantom-like; the button eyes could sooner belong to a doll, which could be any woman. The body posture is directed at the gaze of the viewer, before whom she exhibits her genitals. The splayed gesture of the hands is peculiar: these appear intractably hard and call to mind the hands of Schiele.

## Body Perspectives

Schiele ignored light and shadow effects that model the body, and instead dispensed shadow strokes that divested the character of all spatial containment. In his atelier, he often worked on a ladder from where he captured his models from a bird's eye view











perspective in an extreme visual angle of under- and oversight. This calls to mind one of his verses: "An intimate bird sits in a leafy tree, he is dull coloured, hardly moves and does not sing; his eyes reflect a thousand greens." He isolated the creatures in his view, set them in a world without time or place. Bodies form space. An example of the spatial lack of orientation of his subjects is the commissioned artwork for Friederike Maria Beer, the fashion-conscious daughter of a cabaret proprietor who actively followed Viennese art events.

On Schiele's suggestion, she allowed her full body likeness to be painted on the ceiling. It shows her in a colourful patterned dress in a rigid pose, her body strangely floating, free of all gravitational pull, her raised arms with the indefinable hand gesture call to mind Schiele's self-portraits once again.

## Vampire-Like Trait of Sex

Ulrich Brendel wrote in the periodical *Die Aktion* that Schiele captured "the vampire-like trait of sex". His models lamented: "It is no pleasure; he always sees only the one thing." At the same time, Freud discovered the fear of castration mechanism: "the sight of Medusa's head, that is to say, that of the feminine genitalia, causes one to become rigid with fright, transforming the beholder into stone. To become rigid symbolizes the erection." A girl, her face remaining anonymously sketch-like, reclines backwards; her uplifted skirt is pleated out of which her genitals peek, becoming an inner eye slit. Again and again, Schiele discovers and sees, shows and offers the most intimate, forbidden part to the viewer. He carefully paints it in watercolours, a calyx of orange colour like a fruit.

## Disgust and Allure

Schiele scarcely modelled the bodies he painted, only a few coloured splotches animate the white paper surface on which the body seems to lie confined by a few lines. Schiele's patron, Carl Reininghausen, whom Schiele instructed in drawing and painting, complained that he "paints so casually that the composition is no longer recognizable in places due to the splotches". The marks on the body executed by the use of a wash are astonishing; often in contrasting colours of green and red, they create aggressive tension. In contrast to the general impression of the shape, the splotches point to a closer view. This intimacy exposes the condition of the skin. Schiele's models do not possess unblemished white, alabaster bodies, rather, he gets under their skin. Hofmann wrote of the artist, "The body becomes a wound." Schiele turns the fleshy inner part of the vagina inside out.

As to the aesthetics of the colour splotches which like the famous blotch paintings by Rorschach render the viewer a surface to project onto, Hugo von Hofmannsthal wrote that "art is magical writing, which uses colours instead of words to portray an internal vision

*Three Girls*, 1911.  
Watercolour and pencil, 48 x 31.5 cm.  
Private collection.





*Seated Couple*  
(Egon and Edith Schiele), 1915.  
Pencil and gouache on paper,  
51.8 x 41 cm.  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina,  
Vienna.

*Standing Nude with Blue Cloth*,  
1914.  
Gouache, watercolour and pencil,  
48.3 x 32.2 cm.  
Germanisches Nationalmuseum,  
Nuremberg.

of the world, a puzzling one, without being". Other contemporaries, however, described Schiele's art as "manically demonic". "Some of his pictures are materialisations of obscured consciousness, of apparitions grown bright." His friend Roessler in turn stressed that his face is the synthesis of inner human existence. Doubtless, the nude studies reflected the inner world of the soul's condition imposed onto the model by the artist. "I am everything at once, but never shall I do everything all at once," declared Schiele, who incorporated psychological role-play into the paintings of his models. Schiele tried to capture his own psychological experience.

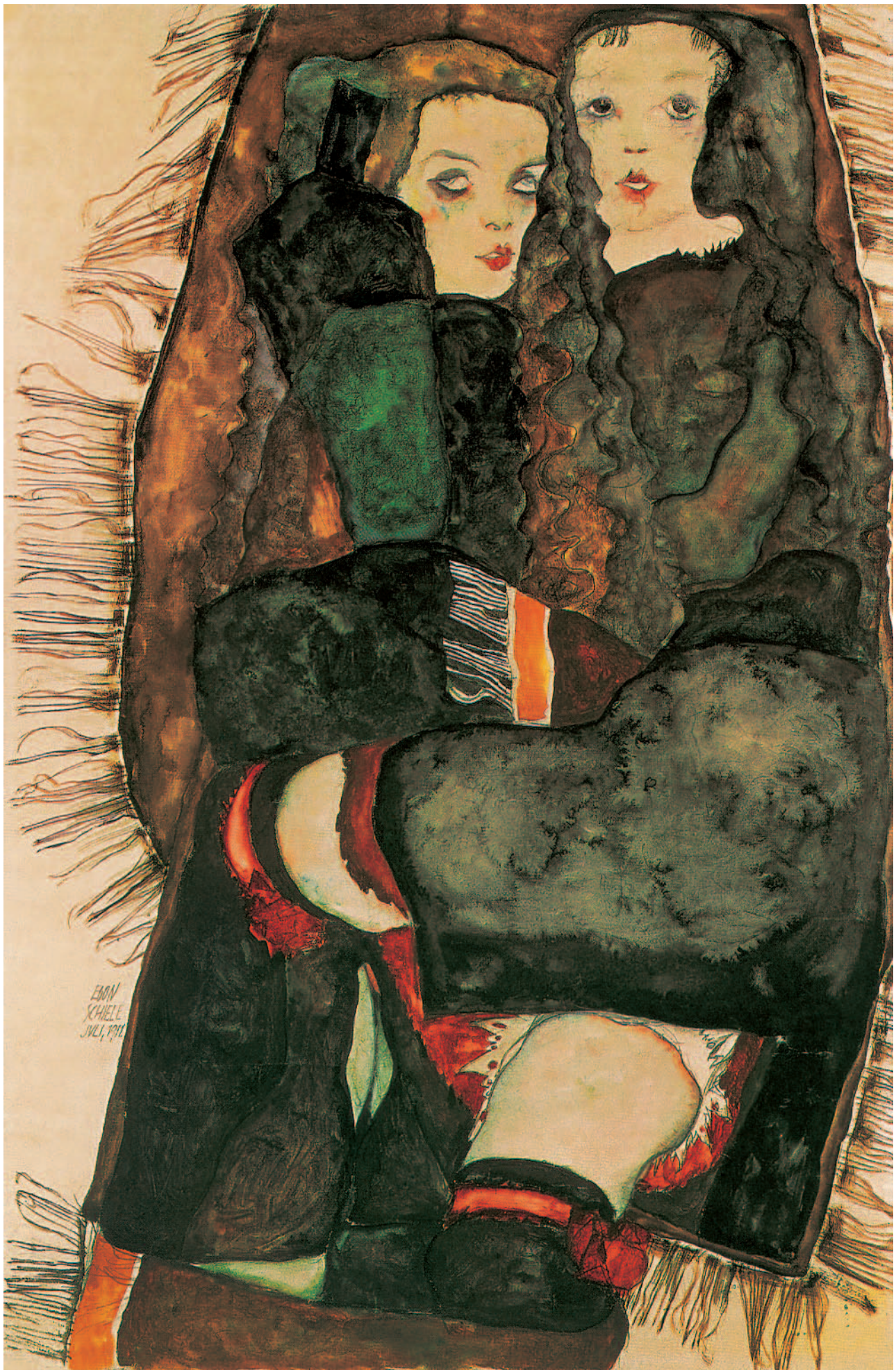
## The Age of the Pornographic Industry

In the year 1850, with the invention of photography, in particular the daguerreotype, pornographic photographs also came into fashion. On the one hand, the photographs served as a model for artists, also for Schiele who took many photographs of his models. On the other hand, they were collected by erotomaniacs. Mainly, however, they were used as presentation cards at bordellos by means of which the visitor could compile his "menu".













*Two Girls on Fringed Blanket*, 1911.  
Gouache, watercolour, ink and pencil,  
56 x 36.6 cm.  
Private collection.

*Seated Woman in Violet Stockings*,  
1917.  
Gouache and black crayon,  
29.3 x 44.2 cm.  
Private collection.















The production of erotic pictures was not prohibited, though advertising them was. The models as well as the photographer risked going to prison. The first conviction was made in 1851. When 4,000 obscene prints and four large albums of "nude women" were discovered in the possession of the French photographer Joseph-Antoine Belloc, he received a minor sentence of three months detention.

The models were usually prostitutes, pliant women, but also working women in dire financial straits and gutter children picked up from the streets. To satisfy voyeuristic desire, the Munich publisher Guilleminot Recknagel had a stock of 4,000 photographs of models aged between ten to thirty years old. Around 1870, erotic postcards came into circulation. Thematic scenes from Greek and Roman mythology, heroic or Christian martyr scenes with a naked Magdalene, crucifixion of female characters and nude Greeks were portrayed. In provincial theatres, these pictures were very popular. Famous collectors were the Marquis of Byros in Vienna and in Munich Doctor Kraft Ebbing. Baron von Meyer loved the "sweet girls" from Vienna. Schiele surely profited from the high sales of pornographic photographs in direct relation to lustful consumption. Yet, his erotic drawings testify to a personal question, which in turn is embodied in this decadent epoch: namely the dialectics of carnal desire and the "death instinct".

## Schiele's Arrest

In August 1911, Schiele felt impelled to relocate to Neulengbach near Vienna in Lower Austria with Wally. His retreat to the country was naïve and out-of-touch with reality. Inevitably, he would offend the conservative population in the countryside with his unorthodox lifestyle. Living in sin with the still underage Wally would rile the population of the provincial town against Schiele. For the village youth, however, Schiele's studio was a haven of wellbeing. Gütersloh described the free-spirited atmosphere: "well, they slept, recuperated from parental thrashings, lazily lolled about, something they were not permitted to do at home"; until 13 April 1912, when a catastrophic incident occurred.

The father of a thirteen-year-old girl, who had run away from home and found refuge in Schiele's home, reported him for kidnapping. The charge was withdrawn, but Schiele was arrested and charged with endangering public morality and with circulating "indecent" drawings. Schiele's defence by Heinrich Benesch, however, was naïve. Benesch wrote: "Schiele's carelessness is responsible for the incident. Whole swarms of little boys and girls came into Schiele's studio to frolic. There, they saw the nude study of a young girl." For the sake of his art, Schiele forgot all modesty, lifting the skirts of the sleeping children, and 'surprising' two girls embracing one another. Exposure of his own private sphere as well as that of others became a confession-like, artistic expression of his own truthfulness. The private sphere and public domain became interchangeable. Schiele's influential collector Carl Reininghausen procured an attorney in Vienna for him, but at the same time dispensed with the "cordial you" (informal) between them.

*Reclining Nude with Legs Spread Apart*, 1914.

Gouache and pencil, 37.4 x 48.2 cm.  
Graphisches Sammlung Albertina,  
Vienna. (p. 58)

*Woman with Black Stockings*, 1913

Gouache, watercolour and pencil,  
48.3 x 31.8 cm.  
Private collection. (p. 59)

*Reclining Nude with Yellow Towel*, 1917.

Gouache and black crayon,  
29 x 45.7 cm.  
Private collection.



In St. Pölten, Schiele spent twenty-four days in custody. He pleaded: "To inhibit an artist is a crime. It is called murder of life coming into being". The prison stay validated him, the artist, in his role as an outsider. Several self-portraits of Schiele as a prisoner testify to this time. Solemnly the judge burnt one of the indecent drawings in the courtroom. Schiele's reply was: "I do not feel chastised, but cleansed."

## International Artist

In Munich, the art dealer Golz exhibited Schiele's works. A critical year, in 1912 the "New Art Group", together with the artists union, displayed *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) in Budapest, Munich and Essen. In November 1912, Schiele returned to Vienna and moved into an atelier in the Hiertzinger Hauptstrasse. Klimt introduced him to the collector August Lederer, whose son Erich became his pupil. Franz Pfemfert published poems and drawings by Schiele in the Berlin periodical *Die Aktion*. Three of Schiele's works could be seen in the international special alliance exhibition in Cologne. The lithograph *Male Nude Study* appeared in the *sema-mappe* (portfolio) of the Delphin Publishing House in Munich.

In 1913, Schiele became a member of the Bund Österreichischer Künstler (Federation of Austrian Artists), of which Gustav Klimt was president. In the same year, he went to Munich, where he took part in a collective exhibition at the Galerie Golz. On 28 July 1914, war was officially declared between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Serbia. Schiele commented: "We live in the most violent time the world has ever seen. Hundreds of thousands of people perish miserably, everyone must bear his fate either living or dying; we have become hard and fearless. That which was before 1914 belongs to another world."

Schiele continued with his work. He was now an internationally recognised artist who had exhibitions in Rome, Brussels and Paris. Anton Josef Trëka (1893-1940) photographed Schiele in extravagant pantomime poses. In the Berlin periodical *Die Aktion*, using gestures like sign language, he wrote: "We are above all people of the times, in other words, such who have at the very least found the way into our present time." In 1915, the Viennese Galerie Arnot displayed an exclusive exhibition of sixteen paintings, watercolours and drawings by Schiele, among them Schiele's *Self-Portrait as St. Sebastian* (p. 157). With this religiously engaged role model, he stands in the tradition of Oskar Kokoschka, Rainer Maria Rilke and Georg Trakl, who saw themselves as martyrs tormented by society. Yet at the same time, Schiele held the reins of his career adroitly in his hands.

*Portrait of the Artist's Wife, with Hands on Hips*, 1915.  
Carbon pencil, 45.7 x 28.5 cm.  
Private collection.

*The Artist's Sister-in-Law in Striped Dress, Seated*, 1917.  
Pencil, gouache, and watercolour, 43.8 x 28.5 cm.  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna. (p. 64)

*Portrait of the Artist's Wife, Standing (Edith Schiele in Striped Dress)*, 1915.  
Oil on canvas, 180 x 110 cm.  
Gemeentemuseum voor Moderne Kunst, The Hague. (p. 65)

## Schiele's Socially Advantageous Marriage

Schiele's beloved sister Gerti married a fellow artist, Anton Peschka, and their young son often spent time with his uncle. Across from Schiele's atelier lived his landlords,

















the middle class Harms family with their two young daughters. Schiele, disguised as an Apache, allowed them to see him at the window. Later, he sent Wally with an invitation to the cinema and the assurance that she too would accompany them. The two sisters modelled for Schiele and, in their vanity, competed for the favours of the young artist. Coldheartedly he informed Wally that he would marry Edith, a socially advantageous match for him, whereupon Wally joined the Red Cross as a nurse and went to the front where she would succumb to scarlet fever in 1917. In the allegorical painting *Death and the Maiden (Man and Girl)* (p. 166), Schiele himself came to terms with his separation from Wally.

## The Bourgeois Schiele

On 17 June 1915, five days after his twenty-fifth birthday, Schiele married Edith Harms. Four days later he was inducted into military service in Bohemia. In 1916, he was held captive in the Russian prisoner-of-war camp located in Mühlung near Wieselburg. *Die Aktion* published two xylographs. One year later, Schiele returned to Vienna to work in the army museum. At first, his wife was his exclusive model. However, as she grew plumper, Schiele once again began to look for models elsewhere. In 1918, one hundred seventeen sessions with other models were recorded in his notebook. The Vienna book dealer Richard Lanyi published a portfolio with twelve collotypes of Egon Schiele's drawings. In December, Schiele worked for the periodical *The Dawn*. In a letter dated 2 March 1917, Schiele wrote to his brother-in-law: "Since the bloody terror of world war befell us, some will probably have become aware that art is more than just a matter of middle-class luxury."

## Schiele, a Celebrated Artist

After the sudden death of Klimt and the exile of Kokoschka, Schiele was the most famous artist in Vienna. He exhibited nineteen large paintings and twenty-four drawings in the 49<sup>th</sup> Vienna Secession of 1918. Franz Martin Haberditzl purchased the *Portrait of the Artist's Wife, Seated* (p.66) for the Moderne Galerie. It is the first acquisition of a painting while Schiele was still alive. However, Schiele had to paint over the plaid skirt, as the museum's director found it too indecent. Schiele could now afford a larger atelier; the old one was to become an art school. Already in 1917, Schiele had a plan for an art centre where the various disciplines of literature, music and visual art could coexist. The best-known founding members were Schönberg, Klimt, and the architect Hofmann. Death, however, prevented these plans. On October 31, three days after the death of his wife who was six months pregnant, Schiele also died from Spanish flu. Three days later, on 3 November 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Empire capitulated.

*Portrait of the Artist's Wife, Seated*, 1918.

Oil on canvas, 139.5 x 109.2 cm.

Österreichische Galerie, Belvedere, Vienna.

*Mother and Child*, 1914.

Gouache and black pencil, 48.1 x 31.9 cm.

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna. (p. 68)







# His Work

Sunflower I	70	Cardinal and Nun (Caress)	130
Portrait of the Painter Anton Peschka	73	Self-Portrait with Chinese Lantern Plant	133
Portrait of Otto Wagner	74	Portrait of Valerie Neuzil	134
Seated Nude Girl	77	Portrait of Ida Roessler	137
Seated Female Nude with Raised Right Arm	78	Holy Family	138
Kneeling Girl in Orange-Red Dress	81	Woman in Black Stockings (Valerie Neuzil)	141
The Dead Mother I	82	Double Portrait (Chief Inspector Heinrich Benesch and His Son Otto)	142
Schiele Drawing a Nude Model in Front of a Mirror	85	Seated Female Nude, Elbows Resting on Right Knee	145
Female Nude	86	Blind Mother	146
Mother and Child	89	Young Mother	149
Reclining Girl in a Dark Blue Dress	90	Nude with Green Turban	150
Portrait of the Publisher Eduard Kosmack	93	Two Girls (Lovers)	153
The Painter Max Oppenheimer, Three-Quarter Length	94	Portrait of Friederike Maria Beer	154
Portrait of Arthur Roessler	97	Self-Portrait as St. Sebastian (Poster)	157
Seated Male Nude (Self-Portrait)	98	Two Girls, Lying Entwined	158
Newborn Baby	101	Coitus	161
The Poet (Self-Portrait)	102	Krumau Town Crescent (The Small City V)	162
Two Little Girls	105	Decaying Mill (Mountain Mill)	165
Group of Three Girls	106	Death and Maiden (Man and Girl)	166
The Dancer Moa	109	Portrait of an Old Man (Johann Harms)	169
Moa	110	Portrait of Heinrich Benesch	170
Observed in a Dream	113	Seated Woman in Underwear, Back View	173
Two Girls (Lovers)	114	Embrace (Lovers II)	174
Seated Girl, Facing Front	117	Sitting Woman with Bent Knee	177
Autumn Trees	118	Mother with Two Children III	178
Procession	121	Reclining Female Nude	181
Prophets	122	Four Trees	182
Agony	125	Edge of Town (Krumau Town Crescent III)	185
Hindering the Artist Is a Crime, It Is Murdering Life in the Bud	126	Portrait of the Painter Paris von Gütersloh	186
Autumn Sun I (Sunrise)	129	The Friends (Round Table), Small	189
		The Family (Squatting Couple)	190







# SUNFLOWER I

1908

Oil on cardboard

44 x 33 cm

Niederösterreichisches Landesmuseum, St. Pölten

Schiele was never primarily interested in the actual replication of appearance in his art and this is particularly noticeable in his successive portrayals of sunflowers. Schiele would have been very familiar with this theme which had, of course, already been much explored by Van Gogh, and this is the first known image in this particular series. It is certainly derivative of the Secession's decorative tradition but adds something personal and distinctive. The entire top plane of the canvas is taken up by the bloom and, despite its ripeness and bounteous colour, the sunflower is also on the verge of death. While the flower and the presence of the seeds therefore suggest youth and energy, the implication is that life follows death which, in its turn, follows life all over again. The patterning of the line is rather obvious since the leaves suggest a horizontal plane while the stalk provides the vertical. This makes it a rather juvenile work, and one not fully achieved spatially, but already the themes that would become prevalent in his remaining oeuvre are much in evidence with a focus on cycles of life and death and distorted, unexpected proportions in the subject itself.



# PORTRAIT OF THE PAINTER ANTON PESCHKA

1909

Oil and metallic paint

110.2 x 100 cm

Private collection

The portrait of the Austrian painter Anton Peschka (1885-1940) is the first one Schiele made of his friend. Within a somewhat square format, Schiele set down a linear composition which accentuates the two-dimensional character of the painting. While extremely meticulous, the painting also succeeds in its use of color: the neutral brown and grey tones dominate and seem to incorporate the model into his environment. Moreover, beige tones of the armchair, which compliment the pattern on the wall, are recalled in the hands and face of Peschka, while the assortment of lavender-grey tints which form the background, are repeated (however less saturated) in the suit of the painter. Only the bold silhouette allows the model to stand out from the background of the painting, giving him a volume, a physical substance. These characteristics bring the work of Schiele closer both to that of an engraving and that of his painting master at that time, Gustav Klimt.

The brown hair, the narrow ecru bands of the collar and the extremities of the sleeves of the shirt worn by Peschka allow for this clear-cut effect. The folded hands, placed on the armrest of the seat seem disproportionate compared to the face. Intertwined fingers, vaguely wrinkled – their intensity contrasts with the serenity of the face of the model. We only distinguish the profile of Peschka, but the look down, the forwards slightly bent head, a little squeezed into the neckline, give the impression of a great interior sense of calm or of a deep meditation.

At the time of the realization of this portrait, the relationship between Schiele and his model was not exactly new. And it is certain that the mutual understanding which connected both painters played a big role in the formal success of this work.

This painting was both part of the first public exhibition Schiele took part in in 1909 in Klosterneuburg, and then, the same year, of the International Art Exhibition Vienna (Internationale Kunstschau).












# PORTRAIT OF OTTO WAGNER

1910

Watercolour and pencil with white highlighting

43.5 x 26 cm

Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, Vienna

 Otto Wagner was a famous Viennese architect who became one of Schiele's early patrons and encouraged him to take up society portraiture. Wagner recognised quite rapidly that the artist had a gift for bringing to life both the façade and the subconscious content of any subject and the architect was keen to explore this gift using the deeply bourgeois Viennese society members as subjects. He presented the artist as a possible portraitist to a number of leading local personalities who were, however, not prepared to pay to sit for an unknown artist barely out of his teens. Wagner stepped in as a volunteer himself and offered to sit for his protégé in a project that seems not entirely complete. Here he sits sternly, looking outwards at the world. His clothes are dark and the only glimmer of light is in the scarf wrapped tightly around his neck. His face is very near to the top of the canvas and his black jacket is emphasised. The overall impression is one of severity and discipline – traits which, at this point, the artist himself admired but rather lacked.



# SEATED NUDE GIRL

1910

Black crayon, watercolour and white highlighting

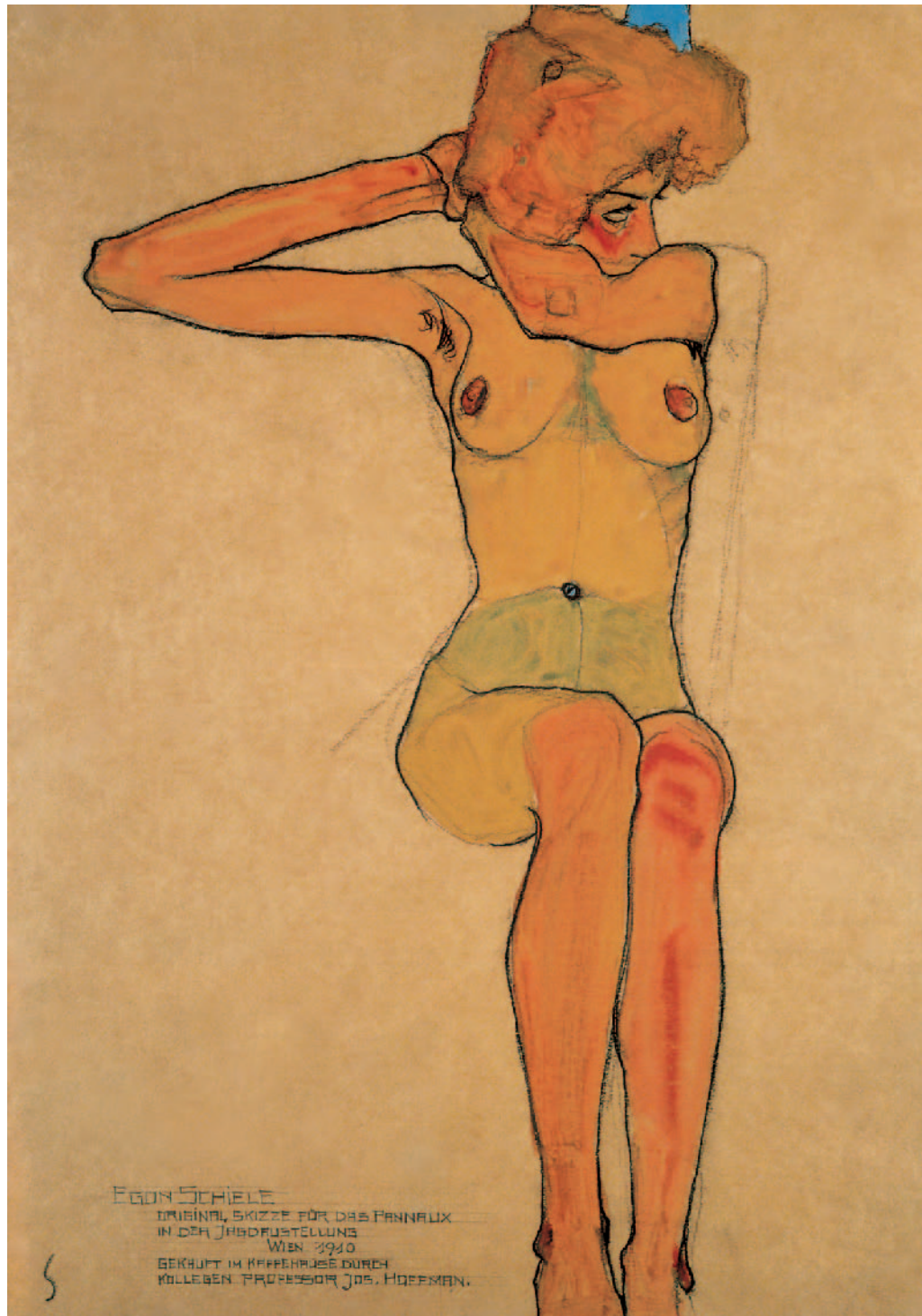
44.8 x 29.9 cm

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

This Expressionistic painting focuses on a young girl who has already seen the worst of life. The bareness of the background and the distortion of the lines lead the viewer immediately into the paucity of expectations within this figure's world. She is emaciated and gaunt, her limbs strangely placed, and she stares directly out of the canvas, watching the world warily. Already, she is reduced to no more than a skeletal figure, stoically awaiting worse rigours yet to come. Her shoulder appears to have been brutally bent backwards, possibly by force, and her hair is unbrushed. Her general wretchedness is reminiscent of the future work of Kathe Kollwitz and demonstrates that Schiele was already moving rapidly away from the pleasure-seeking aesthetics of his former master, Klimt. The genital area is shaded in white, suggesting both a coarseness of focus and abused innocence, and her hands and feet are barely even present. They are unimportant since she seems powerless to use them – to go anywhere or to claim anything as her own. This is an image almost without hope but inspiring levels of compassion.









# SEATED FEMALE NUDE WITH RAISED RIGHT ARM (GERTRUDE SCHIELE)

1910

Gouache, watercolour and black crayon on paper

45 x 31.5 cm

Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, Vienna

S*eated Female Nude* is part of a series of five nude paintings that Schiele created in 1910. The series is noteworthy because it shows the ever-progressing development of Schiele's art during that stage of his life. Three of the five paintings are self-portraits while the other two are portraits of his sister Gertrude. Apart from exhibiting Schiele's technical development, they also reveal the character of Schiele's aestheticism; deeply sensual but while also pathologically obsessed with sexuality at the same.

The model is seemingly sitting but there is no visible rest. The emptiness of her surroundings emphasizes her fragility and her embarrassment which she tries to hide by covering her face with her left arm. She is troubled by an inner conflict which shows itself in her whole body language: On the one hand she is slightly lifting her knee to hide her pubic hairs from the viewer but at the same time she seems to restrain herself from covering her breasts: her right, unnaturally long and bony arm is thrown out but her left hand seems to hold it back so that it can't cover her chest.

This tension between the model, the artist and the viewer expresses itself in the forcefully drawn black contour of the model and in Schiele's usage of bright colours: burning red, biting orange and screaming yellow. By applying a blue spot above Gertrude's orange hair, Schiele is playing with the complementary effect of colours: it is drawing the attention towards the coloured area and away from the true core of the painting: the nudity of his sister. Solely by painting this simple blue spot he expresses the whole psychological essence of the artwork. It thoroughly unveils the fragility of his sister who was embarrassed to sit frontally naked in front of her brother and so far only had allowed him to paint her from behind. In essence, the painting shows the blossoming sense of her own sexuality which she is just getting aware of herself.

# KNEELING GIRL IN ORANGE-RED DRESS

1910

Gouache, watercolour and black pencil on paper

44.6 x 31 cm

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna

This painting is particularly notable for the study of composition that Schiele makes. His sister Gertrude once more serves as a model for her elder brother. In this artwork the canvas itself is the supporting structure of the model. Gertrude presses her left foot against the right border of the painting while her right foot and left knee find footing on the lower edge. The posture of the young woman – her body is seen in profile, her face turned towards the beholder as she balances on her left knee – resembles a rhombus.

The rhombus itself is part of a circular arc which originates at the tip of her ankle boot and ends in her face. The soft pencil stroke that connects the hem of her dress and her left wrist indicates that Schiele intentionally composed this interplay of posture and geometry.

Compared to *Seated Female Nude* (p. 78) Gertrude is now radiating with a confidence that she did not have in the previous painting. No longer nude, she can cast off the awkwardness and shame and look firmly at her brother, flashing a subtle smile that is malicious almost to the point of being downright scornful. This impression is intensified by her interlaced hands in front of her face that leave only a part of her facial expression visible. Even the colours that Schiele uses in the painting serve to amplify this effect.

While the lower part of the painting is dominated by fiery red and orange shades, the upper part, around Gertrude's face, is composed of muter shades of brown, yellow and green. The usage of the colours enables the beholder to wholly focus on the young woman's piercing stare.

With this painting Schiele leaves the two-dimensionality of *Art Nouveau* behind for good. By combining the colours red and orange with deeper hues he manages to create a depth effect, despite the lack of detail in the background, which also translates to the subject matter of the painting.











# THE DEAD MOTHER I

1910

Oil and pencil on wood

32.4 x 25.8 cm

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna

Schiele wrote in a letter in 1912 that “bodies have light of their own, which they use up in the course of living.” He always had a troubled relationship with his own mother who never forgave her son for the uncompromising financial selfishness with which he pursued his career as a painter. For a variety of reasons, therefore, the mother figure was a significant theme in Schiele’s work and one associated with many areas of anxiety. His preoccupation with images of death is often brought into clear contrast with those of motherhood, and the cycle of birth, decay and death is omnipresent in his work. Here the mother’s ‘light of life’ keeps only her face and that of her child’s in focus. The child at the centre appears to be both wrapped up in fetus position, as if in the womb, but also shrouded, containing from the moment of its birth, the premonition of its death. The mother, too, is a figure of iconic parenthood but clings to her child, surrounded by the blackness of the death void. Outside the area of light, her wrinkled, aged hand already shows unmistakable signs of decay.

# SCHIELE DRAWING A NUDE MODEL IN FRONT OF A MIRROR

1910

Pencil on paper

55.2 x 35.3 cm

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

This multi-reflecting image is very complex. Schiele, here, is not merely sketching the model and the model's reflection but also portrays himself sketching both of these in reverse. In a very modern way, Schiele here is layering viewpoint upon viewpoint to achieve a sense of the intricacies of identity and, simultaneously, drawing attention to the fact that none of these images is actually 'real' since they are all refracted through a mirror. The subject and the object are both simultaneously depicted and questioned and their delicate symbiosis is, therefore, apparent. In many senses, however, this is more an image of Schiele himself and his own position in the world than a representation of the model – his name, indeed, comes first in the title of the picture despite the fact that the model appears effectively twice. The model, who is assumed to be the dancer, Moa, is almost androgynous, like a feminine representation of the body of a male artist – Schiele again recalling himself rather than his subject.









# FEMALE NUDE

1910

Gouache, watercolour and black crayon

44.3 x 30.6 cm

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

The body is here so disjointed as to appear almost mutilated. The head and neck are severed from the torso by thick black lines; the legs are cropped at the stocking tops and the hand seems out of proportion and grasping as well as totally unconnected to the rest of the body. The torso itself is an angular, misshapen lump of bony flesh. The framing of the body's outline in white is a device which Schiele frequently employed at this stage in his career. While it is functionally useful here to pull the four disconnected parts of the body together, it also gives the model's body an iconic and slightly ironic halo as well as making her strange features seem even odder. Despite all these physical idiosyncrasies, the image is arresting. The body's apparent elasticity lends her added erotic power. The white lines that draw the viewer directly into the decoratively patterned pubic hair and the wild power of the floating red hair on the model's head add to the sexual force of the image. All of which places this portrait firmly within the framework of an Expressionist work.

## MOTHER AND CHILD

1910

Gouache, watercolour and pencil

55.6 x 36.5 cm

Private collection

This is a work which, superficially, appears to be a loving portrait of parenthood but, just below the surface, is clearly a semi-religious, allegorical work, which tackles many of Schiele's prevailing concerns about life, death, fecundity and thwarted eroticism. As in much of his painting of this period, the mother figure is both slightly off-centre and distorted but also surrounded by the glow of a purifying white halo. This lends her the gravitas of motherhood and, allegorically, of the Virgin Mary. She twists away from the viewer in a way that suggests both coy modesty and erotic anticipation. Her bare buttocks and her stocking tops rather than her facial features become central to the canvas. The baby, meanwhile, becomes a merely blurred outline, indistinct and clutching tentatively at the protective mother. It is the fronds of the mother's hair that reach out gently into the rest of the canvas while the child's fingers turn inwards for protection.











# RECLINING GIRL IN A DARK BLUE DRESS

1910

Gouache, watercolour and pencil

45 x 31.3 cm

Private collection

This is a crudely sexual gouache with the girl's skirt hauled up over her knees and exposing her engorged genitalia to all the world. The sexual parts are highlighted in white and are the undisguised, central focus of the work. This is partially a work designed to expose our natural and ugly erotic feelings, but it is also, and very definitely, an objective picture about erotic interest, designed to arouse that erotic interest itself. This does not necessarily make the work in itself pornographic though it comes very close to such a charge. While many twenty-year-olds are excited about sexual discovery, Schiele did something slightly more challenging with this emotion. He looked up the model's skirt but he also appeared to be making a comment about this gaze itself. The image is too coarse to provoke pure unadulterated sexual arousal. The face is distorted, almost in anguish, the pleasure principle is perverted and the subject pulled away from the viewer like a puppet. Schiele has brought depths of unpleasant Freudian self-analysis to the superficial.

# PORTRAIT OF THE PUBLISHER EDUARD KOSMACK

1910

Oil on canvas

100 x 100 cm

Österreichische Galerie, Belvedere, Vienna

Schiele's patron Arthur Roessler introduced him to Eduard Kosmack, who published the magazine that Roessler edited. Kosmack soon became interested in the artist's work and commissioned him to paint this portrait. He sits frozen in space and squashed into the very centre of the canvas – at the heart of the action but rather uncomfortable with his position. He stares fixedly at the viewer who cannot be sure whether this rigidity is due to an inner calm or an inner tension. His eyes are glazed and his outline slightly distorted. He appears to be both introverted and bold, ready to spring from his contained space and fill the rest of the canvas. Kosmack was, apparently, a keen amateur hypnotist and Schiele was fascinated by this aspect of his personality. The portrait hints at the publisher's strange magnetism but also at his apparent isolation, exposed to the world on a plain background, scored with violently carved claw-markings, and dragging the gaze downwards towards a floor which is enlivened only by a withering sunflower.











# THE PAINTER MAX OPPENHEIMER, THREE-QUARTER LENGTH

1910

Watercolour, ink and black crayon

45 x 29.9 cm

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

“M opp” or “Opp” are nicknames that his friends frequently used for Max Oppenheimer (1885-1954). They also explain the significance of the doodle in the upper right corner of the painting. Since 1908, the Austrian painter and illustrator belonged to the close circle of friends surrounding Egon Schiele. The two of them together joined the avant-garde movement in Vienna, which also had notable followers such as Oskar Kokoschka.

The deep friendship which connected the two of them also inspired them to draw portraits of each other. This may explain the unusual format of the painting that cuts off Oppenheimer's right arm. Presumably, this portrait was made in the course of several portrait sessions in which both artists in turn posed for one another. Oppenheimer's missing hand was probably busy holding a brush which is why it does not make an appearance on the canvas. Furthermore, the look that the painter casts at the beholder and the way his jacket is drawn, indicating movement, create the impression that Opp just turned away from his painting to look directly towards the beholder.

In this watercolour painting, Schiele's drawing technique is recognizable. It involves creating a silhouette of the character first before applying colours to the pre-defined fields. So, when Schiele is planning to use the deep black of Indian ink to colour the jacket of Oppenheimer, he first defines this field by pre-drawing it with pencil and then starts filling the space with ink. Oppenheimer's shirt is subtly downplayed so as not to flood the painting with intense colours and keep the focus on the character. Schiele achieves this effect by using the natural tone of the paper as a “replacement white”. He highlights the face and the hands by using a bright, biting yellow; yet another step towards Expressionism.

# PORTRAIT OF ARTHUR ROESSLER

1910

Oil on canvas

99.6 x 99.8 cm

Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, Vienna

In 1909, Schiele met the art critic Arthur Roessler at an exhibition of the New Art Group, of which he was an important, younger member. Roessler immediately appreciated the young artist's talent and quickly became his spokesman, his collector and his agent. He also wrote some of the earliest critical studies of Schiele's work. In this portrait of a man critical to his own career, Schiele gave his patron a dynamic, elegant bearing suited to one so influential. He does flatter Roessler but only by making him appear ascetic and important, and not by making him unfeasibly handsome. Roessler's head and right arm turn left while his left arm and right leg turn right. This gives the portrait a sense of rather magisterial movement and counter-movement, and contains a harmony of form not often present in his work of this period. This is a coherent, smooth image with a fine rendering of detail and Roessler's skeletal, crossed fingers add to the wonderful interior calm of the image.











## SEATED MALE NUDE (SELF-PORTRAIT)

1910

Oil and gouache

152.5 x 150 cm

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna

Schiele was fascinated by his own image and constantly drew both his face and his body. In this relatively early gouache, he uses his dual function as both model and painter to deconstruct his own image, presenting it in its full distorted ugliness but, thereby, compelling the viewer to look straight at him. The colour of the torso is human and alive, yet the legs are muddy and mutilated and his hands are invisible. He is, almost certainly, alluding to the piteousness of the image of Christ on the cross and yet here he has eroticised this figure. The only real colour in the work comes from the highlighting of the navel, eyes and sexual organs which seem particularly ominous above the dark zone below. He is in a vortex of light at the centre of the image where Expressionist ugliness is omnipresent but highly personalised and specifically designed to engender compassion for the painter as subject.

# NEWBORN BABY

1910

Watercolour and charcoal

46 x 32 cm

Private collection

In 1910 a gynaecologist friend of Schiele's, Erwin von Graff, allowed Schiele to spend time at the university's gynaecological unit. The artist began a series of images of newborn children in which he managed to play with traditional iconography in order to produce a more realistic, naturalistic interpretation. This baby's head is disproportionately large for its body, which is bony and angular. The movement in the limbs seems strangely gauche. The baby's head, meanwhile, is almost bald but with tufts of flaying hair flying out in all directions. The eyes are half-closed and seem distorted by the pain of labour and by the burden of existence. The stomach is wrinkled and unpleasant while the scrotum appears almost diseased. This is a newborn infant with the heaviness of age already upon him, beginning a journey through life that can only be painful and demanding. Schiele has here abandoned a cozy, traditional image of family life in favour of an unadulterated adherence to 'truth'.











## THE POET (SELF-PORTRAIT)

1911

Oil on canvas

80.1 x 79.7 cm

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna

This is generally considered to be one of Schiele's early masterpieces and a fine example of Expressionist portraiture. The title reminds us of Schiele's notion that all artistic forms are interrelated. Here he states that the artist is a condemned creature who, by virtue of his true vision of the world, sees more and is, therefore, condemned to suffer more. An unusual feature of this painting is that the genitalia appear to be almost hermaphrodite-like, with feminine detail being pierced rather violently by a red-tipped phallic image. This, too, suggests that all artists are as one, whether female or male. It also hints at sexual ambiguities and cross-gender issues which were both fashionable and still slightly outrageous at this period. The notion of the hermaphrodite, however, also leads to the idea that Schiele is both a creator of art and a mother of all creation. He is outside the common sexual and social taboos of society and thus aligned to his fellow artists, but he also contains within himself an almost mythic force and a super-sexual ability to create and procreate.

## TWO LITTLE GIRLS

1911

Pencil, watercolour and white highlighting

40 x 30.6 cm

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

From 1909 onwards, Schiele moved on from the purely linear clarity which his master, Klimt, had taught him, and began to evolve his own, personal style. Klimt soon began exchanging his own drawings with his former pupil, aware that he now had nothing left to learn. In this image, the outline is typically broken and disjointed and, in this way, emphasises particular details. Schiele has moved away from Expressionism and towards Impressionism and he manages to combine form and colour into one harmonious whole, despite his insistence on the true ugliness of the external world. Schiele drew these models in outline from life and later coloured in the image from memory to make it more three-dimensional. This gives the picture a certain stiffness and the models are deliberately squashed together in a slightly artificial, wooden way. The fingers on the lefthand figure are impossibly bent backwards since these girls, like many of Schiele's models, are nothing more than stuffed dolls.











# GROUP OF THREE GIRLS

1911

Gouache, watercolour and pencil with white highlighting

44.4 x 30.8 cm

Graphische Sammlung, Albertina, Vienna

The three figures in this image stare out from the canvas with pathetically empty expressions, offering themselves for inspection and examination. They are models for the artist's use and he is interested in them only as a combination of figures and not as individuals. The middle figure was, initially, totally naked and the green colouring over the sexual organs was later added by another artist. The girl on the left is strangely distorted and raises her arms, apparently squashing the face of the central figure, as if unaware of her presence. All three are more interested in posing for the artist than in their relationship to each other. They are fighting for space on an undefined canvas with the central visual point being the middle girl's navel. It is this body part which holds the gaze rather than the three faces, which are distanced from the centre of a depersonalised canvas via the use of large and simplistic blocks of colour.

# THE DANCER MOA

1911

Pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper

47.8 x 31.5 cm

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna

Many of Schiele's drawings at this time were of the girlfriend of a well-known mime artist called Erwin Osen, whose work had captivated Schiele. Osen's girlfriend, Moa, is here made to look almost like a figure from a work by Klimt with her wildly patterned dress cutting a swathe of hedonistic colour across a plain white background. Klimt's ornamental vision, however, has been subverted by glaring colours and a sense of movement. With her dark hair and eyes, she is clearly a bohemian creature, and a sensual one. The dress is more of a wrap than an item of clothing and there is a sense that it might be unrolled at any moment to reveal her nakedness underneath. Even the title makes it clear that she is an exotic beast of the night, defining her as her profession. The word MOA is inscribed in capital letters on the blank part of the canvas suggesting a boldness and strength of character uncontainable in the visual image itself.









# MOA

1911

Gouache, watercolour and pencil

48 x 31 cm

On loan to the Museum of Modern Art, New York

By 1911 Schiele had mastered the art of the watercolour so completely that he was able to begin experimenting with the medium. He did not particularly like the look of the classical watercolour and he often chose to mix it with gouache and pencil as in this image of the dancer, Moa. The colour helps to bring the cloth to life, lifting it from the page, while the effect of all three media together gives the dancer an extra exoticism and a slight sense of mystery, innovation and depth. Here the name MOA appears once more in capital letters while the dancer's face is in three-quarters profile, alluringly catching the viewer out of the corner of her eye. The movement of the cut-off hand holding the colourful material suggests the subtle grace with which she takes to the stage – an impression enhanced by her majestic, flowing hair. The bushiness of the hair in her armpits is lovingly rendered with animal force and it draws the eye straight down towards the pointed, bright red nipples. She is a wild, uncontrolled creature caught at an unguarded moment, like a foal in the forest.

## OBSERVED IN A DREAM

1911

Watercolour and pencil

48 x 32 cm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The title of this work, *Die Traum-Beschaute*, is rather ambiguous. It simultaneously suggests both that the model is dreaming and that the model is the object of the artist's, and the viewer's, dreams. Both Schiele and the viewer are, to this extent, Peeping Toms, apparently spying on an entirely unselfconscious subject. No attempt is made to enter into the psyche of the subject, who has her eyes closed and is, otherwise decontextualised. This is an entirely objectified view of both this woman and, implicitly, women in general. The genitalia here are placed in the physical centre of the frame since they are central to the artist's imagination. The bright colouring of the erogenous zones backs up the theory that this is a work about the nature of the erotic. The lips, the nipples, the stockings and the sexual organs are all emphasised in bright red and this series of images, unsurprisingly, sold extremely well as pornographic material. Schiele (despite his assurances to the contrary) was well aware of this lucrative market and fully exploited it.











## TWO GIRLS (LOVERS)

1911

Gouache, watercolour and oil pencil on paper

48.3 x 30.5 cm

Private collection

Given his obsession with all aspects of the erotic, it is unsurprising that Schiele was constantly fascinated by the idea of portraying lesbianism, particularly in young girls. The theme first began to appear in 1911 and, in this early version, two girls lie, passive and vulnerable, almost asleep. It is interesting to compare this image with the similarly themed, *Two Girls Lying Entwined* (p. 58), in which Schiele has complicated the subject matter and made the lines, and the interaction, more complex. Here, however, the brightness of the clothes draws the eye towards the bare flesh. The buttocks form the centre of the image and are both cocooned and decontextualised. These are not girls, they are not even humans, they are sexual objects whose bodies only matter when they lie together. The faces are, if anything, doll-like and slightly Oriental, with the slightly limp limbs of puppets in a toy shop.

## SEATED GIRL, FACING FRONT

1911

Watercolour and pencil

46.5 x 31.8 cm

Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlung, Munich

Schiele constantly swung between the social desire to shock and provoke, on the one hand, and the artistic impulse to create form and harmony on the other. This latter interest is what distinguishes his work from that of other, more grotesque, definitively sociological artists like, for example, George Grosz. Here the model is a flesh and blood child, young in appearance and yet shockingly old in experience. The watercolour is built around a triangular formation which gives the image a formal quality but one that is slightly off-centre and skewed. This model is almost a member of society but somehow not. She has classical features but her hair escapes from her ponytail and she cannot prevent her underwear from peeping wickedly through her skirts. She looks both doll-like and already past her prime with smudged makeup and a pouting, sexualized mouth. Her eyes are cold and emotionless and her face as pale as death. She is both innocent and prematurely destroyed.











## AUTUMN TREES

1911

Oil on canvas

79.5 x 80 cm

Private collection

Though Schiele had never been, primarily, a painter of nature, he became increasingly interested in the portrayal of trees. In 1911, he painted three such images and, by 1912, this figure had increased to six. These were always autumnal, or even wintry, versions of life, dying or dead, with almost no living foliage and a concentration on the bare trunk of the tree and its place in the earth. The three trees in this picture must allude to the three miserable crosses at Golgotha, and the mood is one of overwhelming melancholy. Schiele, alongside other artists of the period like Janacek, was fascinated by the natural cycles of life and death and saw decay as an inevitable precursor to rebirth, both in nature and in human beings. In a letter in 1913 to his friend Franz Hauer, Schiele wrote and specifically described trees and water in the following terms: "everywhere one is reminded of similar movements in the human body, of similar motions of joy and suffering."

# PROCESSION

1911

Oil on canvas

100 x 100.5 cm

Serge Sabarsky Collection, New York

Featuring a colour palette that is made up of ochre-brown richly varied with shades of red and dominated by black and white pencil strokes, *Procession* depicts a woman in three different stages of her life. The youngest aspect of the women, a brunette girl wearing a black, almost hieratic-looking dress, is in the right quarter of the painting. Taking up the other three quarters of the painting is an elder, mature woman with her hands folded in her lap and a crooked back. The third woman is barely visible; the upper half of her head is cut off by the edge of the painting. Whether she is hovering close to death or already dead cannot be made out, however her lower half resembles a skull rather than the face of a living which could be an indication for the latter. So does the impression that she seems to be "levitating" out of the painting in her wide dress towards a place beyond life and death.

This painting plainly evidences Klimt's influence on Schiele. It clearly pays homage to the Austrian painter's masterwork *The Three Ages of Woman*, which concerns itself with exactly the same topic. However, Schiele's private life also has to be taken into consideration when analysing *Procession*. Even years after the death of Schiele's father, who succumbed to the consequences of a syphilis infection, the young painter was obsessively studying the relationship between sexuality and death. He turned towards the allegory to express his complex view on human suffering. Showing three incarnations of the same woman at the same time creates a visual parallelism is a strong allusion to the concept of trinity. Although Schiele's painting had been devoid of religious content he started to use religious allusions, mainly in the titles, after *Procession*. *Prophets* and *Agony* also indicate the grip that his Catholic upbringing still had on him although he never showed any devotion to the faith. Quite the opposite, we can see that his pseudo-religious metaphors take on a blasphemous and provocative character which culminates in the 1912 painting *Cardinal and Nun*.











## PROPHETS (DOUBLE SELF-PORTRAIT)

1911

Oil on canvas

110.3 x 50.3 cm

Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart

Schiele dwelt constantly on the dichotomy of his own attraction to both life and death. This split-self is made visually present in *Prophets*, where he appears as two different figures, one light and one dark, separate but codependent. These two images emerge from behind a dark foreground: daily life is a shroud through which one must force one's way into the light. The clothed figure is dressed almost like a religious figure, or possibly, Death personified, while the other figure symbolising life is naked. The eyes of the death character are open yet unseeing while the eyes of the life character are closed and yet vibrant and warm. We can be alive and yet not see or we can be dead and able to see, or a combination of any of these things all at the same time. The life figure has a dismembered arm which adds to the general weirdness of a double self-portrait which is about a split sense of self and in which the form matches the theme precisely.

# AGONY

1912

Oil on canvas

70 x 80 cm

Bavarian State Painting Collection, Munich

This is an image with deeply religious overtones made explicit by the monk-like attire of the two figures. The precise identity of these figures is not important. What matters is the way that Schiele has used their strangely held poses to create an entirely expressionistic image from a patchwork of linear patterns, colours and shapes. Schiele has used everything he learnt from Klimt and his thesis that decorative patterning is extremely useful for filling empty spaces, and has incorporated this information into the body of the picture itself, bringing the background of the painting right into the foreground, and thus merging life with itself. The lines take the viewer both out to the edges of the image and then straight back into its heart. This use of a pattern which stretches from one edge of the image to the other lies in direct contrast to Schiele's specifically religious-themed paintings where the holy images have to hold centre stage in order to emphasise their sanctity.









DEKONTEK HENRY ET DU VERGONNY  
ET HOUT FEMME-DE L'ESSE-RODIN



# HINDERING THE ARTIST IS A CRIME, IT IS MURDERING LIFE IN THE BUD

1912

Watercolour and pencil on Japanese paper

48.5 x 31.5 cm

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

Schiele was arrested on 13 April 1912 on a charge of seducing a minor, and was later sent to prison for immoral artwork. He was eventually released on 8 May but not until the judge had set fire to one of Schiele's drawings as pornographic material. While in prison, Schiele executed a number of self-portraits – for obvious reasons, these became the only works he did of himself without use of a mirror. Here he lies on a cell bed, huddled beneath a huge, ill-fitting coat. He is unkempt and unshaven, his body almost invisible beneath the weight of his surroundings. The environment itself is bleak and empty. The only element that gives away the prison surroundings is the black wool blanket which lies discarded at the bottom of the grimmest of beds. Schiele does not fight back but glories in his martyrdom to art itself. He has no visible limbs and is incapable of escape or fight. He uses the pathos of this image to advertise his plight – and yet he cannot resist adding an entire sentence of aggrieved self-pity to the bottom right-hand corner of the canvas.

## AUTUMN SUN I (SUNRISE)

1912

Oil on canvas

80.2 x 80.5 cm

Private collection

The two brown hills in the foreground of this painting are reminiscent of human breasts and thus representative of life and fecundity. Each peak, however, also bears a battered, dying tree. The blocks of dreary colour are broken up by the horizontal lines of the mountains in the background which are, in turn, pierced by the rays of a pale, white sun. In order to create a harmonious whole, Schiele has painted one of the support posts dark blue and the other bottle green, and he has then garlanded the hills with multicoloured flowers and leaves whose primary colours stand out forcefully against the grayish-white sky. Interestingly, it is nature with its natural colours which is dull, while the man-made objects stand out, bright and bold in a tribute to the aesthetics of Klimt. In some ways, therefore, this is the very embodiment of the two main schools of art from which Schiele sprang, with the Secessionist flowers springing from the hills while the bare landscape symbolises the more classical school of art from which Schiele emerged but which he has here, quite literally, left behind.











## CARDINAL AND NUN (CARESS)

1912

Oil on canvas

69.8 x 80.1 cm

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna

This is triangular in form – a shape that always alludes to the solidity of power structures and their firm attachment to the solid ground. The theme of sexual and moral corruption within the church is in itself not unusual, but in this image the Cardinal (who is clearly identified as Schiele himself) has been caught *in flagrante* with a nun who bears the face of Wally, Schiele's long-time lover and model. This association of imagery was outrageous for many reasons and not just because the pair were unmarried. Much more important was the fact that they were well-known to their neighbours in Krumau as an immoral couple who kept depraved company and were, therefore, made to feel so uncomfortable that they were forced to leave town. In addition, the pair appear to be naked underneath their religious attire, with their bony legs appearing from underneath their ritual apparel, and inseparable from it – the sexual imagery forms a physical part of the religious theme.

# SELF-PORTRAIT WITH CHINESE LANTERN PLANT

1912

Oil and gouache on wood

32.2 x 39.8 cm

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna

For this self-portrait Schiele decided to use the landscape format. He makes use of the format which is rather unusual for a portrait, by playing with the depth perception of the viewer. He shortens the upper part of his head and his torso to put special emphasis on his facial expression, especially his right eye which is supposed to capture the attention of the viewer. Additionally he places the vanishing point of his face in the upper right corner of the painting, thus decentralizing the composition and creating the impression that he is looking down on us. Schiele strengthens this effect for one by connecting the counter-running lines of shoulder and look he is casting and also through painting the background in an immaculate white.

Another aspect that makes this painting extraordinary is the fact that this painting perfectly demonstrates Schiele's skilful drawing technique. The broad pencil outline which creates and governs the space (which is subsequently filled with colours in different shades to create depth) is clearly visible. Despite the careful choice of colours and their effects – the red of the lantern plant works in perfect dissonance with the green of the iris – the impression prevails that colour is only of secondary importance. The line of the pencil dominates; it is searching for the perfect line and tracing it along the outline of the left shoulder which is extended by the contour of the right cheek and continues up to the earlobe, running parallel to the subtle line of the neck.

Apart from his mastery of artistic techniques, Schiele also showcases a psychological self-portrait. Despite his provocative posture, expressed by his challenging stare and his arms that are folded over his chest, there are elements that create a different impression: The way Schiele turns his head towards the beholder but still tries to avoid direct eye contact and the frame of his feeble, rounded shoulders suggest a vulnerability and sensitivity that Schiele might not have intended to display.











## PORTRAIT OF WALLY (VALERIE NEUZIL)

1912

Oil on wood

32 x 40 cm

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna

This portrait of Valerie Neuzil – who Schiele lovingly called “Wally” – depicts Schiele’s lover since 1911 and is the exact companion to the self-portrait on page 133. The posture of both characters, the inclination of their heads, the flower in the background and even the signatures all follow a vertical axial symmetry.

Schiele painted this portrait probably first and used it as a blueprint for his own portrait. Interestingly Valerie never posed in this exact pose for Schiele. Furthermore it’s a combination of two other paintings from the same year. The first one (*Wally with Necklace*, 1912; private collection) served as sketch for the arms and the black dress with the broad white collar while the second (*Kneeling Woman in a Gray Dress*, 1912; Leopold Museum, Vienna) contributed the details for the face. This helps understand the importance of these drawings for Schiele better. This extensive groundwork played an important role in composing the painting on the canvas.

This portrait features a graphical alliteration between the curve of Wally’s right cheek, which is the basis for a semicircle that extends towards the chin, and the stem of the plant at Wally’s right shoulder. The line of the oval of Wally’s cheek repeats itself again at the base of the shoulder.

The colours are exceedingly brighter than in Schiele’s self-portrait. The ochre-orange tone of hair and lips amplifies the intensity of her unnaturally big eyes. Despite her bright eyes, her facial expression remains relatively unreadable. The bearing of her shoulders and the inclination of her head give her a thoughtful expression but the coy smile and the subtly teasing look belong to a seductress, not a thoughtful, bright-eyed girl. Maybe even Schiele was not sure about her and tried to solve this riddle by painting her again and again.

## PORTRAIT OF IDA ROESSLER

1912

Oil on wood

31.6 x 39.4 cm

Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, Vienna

This painting is unusual for Schiele's work during this period since it was not a symbolic portrait but a purely aesthetic one. Rather like Schiele's portrait of his patron in 1910, this is a calm, flattering image of a woman on whose husband's support the artist depended. Roessler was continually supportive of his protégé's art and, alongside a number of other patrons, enabled Schiele to move into a new studio apartment in Vienna in November 1912 and thus attain some level of physical security. As usual, however, Schiele was unappreciative of his patron's generosity but, nevertheless, felt able to reward Roessler with this sketch of his wife. Received opinion at the time was that Schiele was now, indisputably, one of the finest talents in Vienna. It is a calm picture with poise, containing hints of an interior life but covered with an extremely innovative glaze. It was, therefore, both deeply respectable and yet covered with a patina of the unexpected. Even those critics in Vienna who thought that Schiele was a grossly unpleasant pervert, now hoped that he would be able to harness his erotic imagination and become a mature, fully-developed artist.











# HOLY FAMILY

1913

Gouache and pencil on parchment-like paper

47 x 36.5 cm

Private collection

Despite the fact that this painting represents a conventional Christian view of the world, Schiele still manages to deal with the subject innovatively and reduces the images to a rather abstract, almost linear point of view. The male figure's chin, the spread fingers and the woman's head together form an area of boldly coloured triangles that allude to the Trinity while simultaneously subverting it. The triangular shape also appears at the bottom left of the canvas, suggesting that there is a world outside the church and that the Holy Family partly occupies this space also. The detailed central areas contrast with the large swathes of rather roughly executed, earthy tones in the background, while the baby is deliberately placed in an unusual space, gazing out from an area which might be the mother's womb or, possibly, another place entirely. The child is protected behind his orange veil, recalling, even in birth, the shroud of death, though, in fact, the colours and the expressions in this image are positive and bright, recalling the decorative aesthetic of Klimt.

# WOMAN IN BLACK STOCKINGS (VALERIE NEUZIL)

1913

Gouache, watercolour and pencil

32.2 x 48 cm

Private collection

A longside the unknown models of this period, of whom there were many, Schiele's partner Wally Neuzil constantly reappears. His familiarity with the subject allowed him to constantly experiment with different media. Here, the central focus is on Wally's face and her stockings, which appear bright and luscious in front of a bare background. She looks out from centre stage, both coy and sexual, with her hairband neat but the coiled hair underneath ready to be unleashed at any second. Her legs are crossed but the lines of the work pull the sightlines down towards the genital area and, it seems, the face is merely a distraction from the real focus of the work. Her neck is sensually bare, but so is a large proportion of the rest of the canvas and, again, the distortion of the arms creates an Expressionistic vision of the body. All that matters is the subject, displaced in the world, but here, presented with huge sympathy and affection.











# DOUBLE PORTRAIT (CHIEF INSPECTOR HEINRICH BENESCH AND HIS SON OTTO)

1913

Oil on canvas

121 x 131 cm

Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, Wolfgang-Gurlitt-Museum, Linz

**H**einrich Benesch was one of Schiele's most faithful collectors and a constant patron of his art. His son, Otto, was 17 at the time of this portrait and later became a well-known art historian in his own right, and the director of the Albertina gallery in Vienna. In this harmonious work, the horizontal line provided by the arm creates a physical bridge of affection between the two men but could, just as well, serve to push them violently apart. The rosiness of Benesch's face is energetic and vibrant, his son's is gaunt and pale. The picture resonates with polarities and paradoxes and the parallel lines create mirrors and reflections through which to analyse our own, apparently harmonious, domestic relationships. It is both a testament to the family of the artist's patron – his son is as loyal to Herr Benesch as Herr Benesch is to the artist – and a daunting reminder that all of this harmony may, just as easily, terminally collapse.

# SEATED FEMALE NUDE, ELBOWS RESTING ON RIGHT KNEE

1914

Gouache and pencil

48 x 32 cm

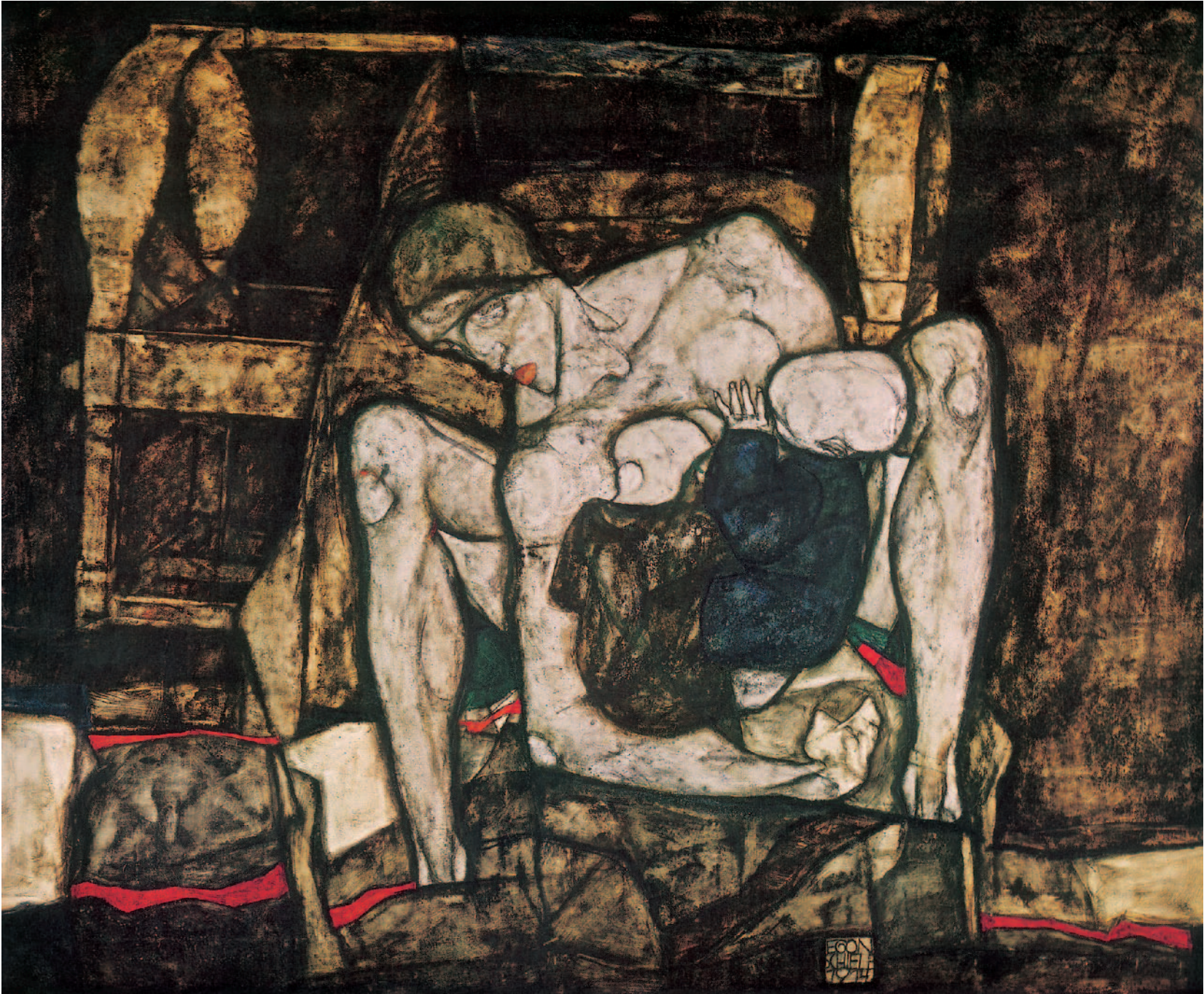
Graphisches Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

As in many of Schiele's female nudes, it is raw sexuality which seems to be the subject of the work, with almost no attention given to the psychological state of the sitter. The model herself looks slightly bored. She is, basically, a sexual object with lips and nipples as her two highlighted features. Her legs are spread purely to draw the viewer's eye into the area around her pubic hair. The torso and the limbs exist only to lead the male gaze from one erogenous zone to another. Their physical function for the model herself is entirely irrelevant to the artist.











# BLIND MOTHER

1914

Oil on canvas

99.5 x 120.4 cm

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna

Rather like a Rodin, Schiele's images of mother with child all tend to be weighed down by an epic quality, suggestive of the heaviness and solidity of sculpture. This particular work is one of the artist's grandest attempts at this kind of deeply symbolic work, with the depiction of the two children almost graphic in its three-dimensionality. The mother's blindness does not hinder her from her role as the font of all life and her baby suckles from within her thighs in a direct connection between birth, life, pain and pleasure. The mother herself, however, is a ghostly figure. She appears to be placed in an attic in front of a storage chest – a font of secret treasure just as she is, herself. The red of her lips and the threads of scarlet across the floor are the only traces of colour which lead, like streams of blood, from within the thighs of the mother and are thus suggestive of both birth and murder.

# YOUNG MOTHER

1914

Oil on canvas

100 x 120 cm

Private collection, Vienna

As is normal in Schiele's art, the individual features of mother and child are not of interest to the artist. The child's head is represented by an oval while the mother's is a stylistic version of femininity. Her pelvis is curved and sensual while her left thigh takes the eye outwards into space. The female body here does not represent any specifically identified individual but, rather, the idea of the maternal figure. Her body is twisted against the child's and her arms are raised to create a more vibrant space. Her cropped limbs help to define the torso which is otherwise devoid of personality. This mother is a source of protection but remains open to attack. The baby is also vulnerable, exploring the mother's body in search of answers, while the mother's body itself is eminently flexible in its plasticity. It could be moulded in an infinite number of ways, and probably will be.











# NUDE WITH GREEN TURBAN

1914

Gouache and pencil

32 x 48 cm

Private collection

By 1914, Schiele had succumbed to the Romantic aesthetic and much of his work, therefore, dwelt on an insoluble dissatisfaction with the present. Schiele drew many models in this mood and the sexual energy in these works seems to spring from an erotic compulsion rather than the simple physical pleasure of masturbation. The whole picture emerges from a sense that the girl's behaviour is negatively dictated by her need for erotic fulfillment and a foreboding sense that something unpleasant will happen if this fulfillment does not take place. The face of the model is heavily stylized and seems more like a plastic doll than a sentient being. Her eyes are closed, heightening the notion that she is merely a device which someone else controls. Her entire body is being manipulated – which is true on the most fundamental level since her very image is being controlled by the artist. The most vibrant item on the canvas is the bright green turban.

## TWO GIRLS (LOVERS)

1914

Gouache and pencil on paper

31 x 48 cm

Private collection

This lesbian couple is viewed from above, giving the observer a slightly distanced and yet voyeuristic perspective. This is an almost graphic description of the sexual act and yet reported in a highly stylised manner. The face of the woman below is glazed and almost Oriental in appearance. She is the more doll-like, passive creature. The woman above is defined by the strength of her spine. She represents a more masculine force and, indeed, the curtailment of her legs is almost reminiscent of male genitalia. There is a lot of movement in the line, suggesting the physical force and energy of this interaction which is, in essence, an animal embrace. The woman on top is forcefully pushing her head into her lover's chest although her lover seems unmoved by this ardour and yet, her fingers are clasped together, drawing her lover down on top of her and into the passive power of her embrace.











# PORTRAIT OF FRIEDERIKE MARIA BEER

1914

Oil on canvas

190 x 120.5 cm

Private collection

Friederike Maria Beer was an affluent Jewess, the daughter of a man who owned two of Vienna's most fashionable nightclubs. She was the same age as Schiele and an avid fan of the Wiener Werkstatte art movement – she dressed according to its fashions and decorated her home according to its styles. Schiele painted this oil with an eye towards her self-consciously dramatic personality, and gave her a cushion to clutch at with youthful ardour. He then added bright, naïve colours to give the painting a folkloric, mythical quality. The dress is decorated with doll-patterns taken from figures that Beer had brought back from a trip to South America. Klimt also painted this young heiress but she could only afford to buy the work by the younger artist. Schiele suggested she hang the painting from her ceiling to give it deliberate iconic value. She was very taken with this idea and hung her portrait above her bed.

## SELF-PORTRAIT AS ST. SEBASTIAN (POSTER)

1914-1915

Gouache, black crayon and ink on cardboard

67 x 50 cm

Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, Vienna

This poster was designed to advertise an exhibition of Egon Schiele's work at the Galerie Arnot in January 1915, which turned out to be a great personal success for the artist. In the poster, Schiele's sense of artistic martyrdom, which he had carried with him since his days in prison, is again forcefully present. St. Sebastian is a fairly common image in classical portraiture but here, as in much of his work, Schiele appropriates a traditional image to create an entirely personal self-portrait. Other local artists, namely Oskar Kokoschka and Max Oppenheimer, had also used explicitly violent images in public posters, but the focus here is more on the pity that the viewer should feel for the artist than the blood and gore itself. In fact, the body is washed clear of the scarlet of blood and this colour paradoxically only appears in the overcoat. Schiele's face is pale and shrivelled, as he presents himself as a victim with all the arrows firing in from the left of the picture, possibly like people entering the gallery and, cleverly therefore, preempting all criticism.



EGON SCHIELE



GALERIE ARNOT  
JANUAR 1915 9-5-1-K







## TWO GIRLS LYING ENTWINED

1915

Gouache and pencil

32.5 x 49.5 cm

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

Here the artist complicates the image he first portrayed in 1911 in *Two Girls (Lovers)* (p. 114). The viewer looks down from above onto a graphic, densely detailed image of two young lesbians. The figure above is almost nude and appears to be masturbating or receiving masturbation. The interaction between self and other is kept deliberately blurred. She stares into the middle distance and her arm is curiously distorted. The most vibrant parts of her body are her nipples and her lips though she does not appear to be in the throes of pleasure. The clothed figure is wearing a cute, folksy dress and has a strange, doll-like, almost Oriental face. Though the picture depicts feminine love, paradoxically everything about this figure suggests manipulation by a male artist. Her limp limbs seem lifeless and her eyes are those of a mannequin, devoid of life. These girls are interlinked but not in pleasure, rather in pleasureless explorations of a physical shell.

# COITUS

1915

Gouache and pencil

32.9 x 49.6 cm

Leopold Collection, Leopold Museum, Vienna

Schiele was obsessed by the portrayal of his own image and constantly photographed himself in a variety of flattering poses. Here, he seems almost to be looking at the camera, waiting for his image to be captured for posterity. His face is gaunt, his lips red. This is a picture that defines his erotic needs rather than an image of a loving union between two people. The woman, who might well be his wife, Edith, is semi-naked, grasping Schiele who is fully clothed. We do not know where they are or why. This is entirely based around Freud's definition of the 'Pleasure Principle', and revolves around themes of sensual self-satisfaction. Schiele's fingers reach out and cover the wildness of the woman's hair. Her fingers are merely able to clutch at his back while she stares at the ceiling and not at the male figure. It is as if she, too, is isolated in her private world of pleasure rather than an active participant in his.











## KRUMAU TOWN CRESCENT (THE SMALL CITY V)

1915

Oil on canvas

109.7 x 140 cm

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The city of Krumau was an important place in Schiele's life. He called it the "dead city" as his father tried to commit suicide in this town and, years later, he was tried for immoral behavior and forced to serve a short prison sentence. These events probably explain the absence of people in the painting and the impression of claustrophobia which is conveyed by the extreme tightness of the buildings depicted in the cityscape. Schiele is trying to create distance to the city and the feeling of claustrophobia by painting it from a bird's eye perspective. These two elements can also be found in Klimt's cityscapes.

Schiele visited Krumau regularly and created several studies for paintings from 1914 on. To be precise, this town crescent served as a motive for two different paintings which Schiele painted during the year 1915. The topic of "movement" is the main object for Schiele's study. The main lines that define the painting are concentric circles that originate in the upper right corner. The first is occupied by small crescent of houses, the second one by the street, the third, houses the main crescent, then the riverbank and the river itself and finally, the last circle is only indicated by roughly hewn, new crescent of houses in the upper left corner. Between all these circles, houses are standing like little, irregular geometric blocks. Their individual parts, walls, windows, roofs and chimneys are isolated from each other by thick pencil lines.

Schiele uses darker shades of brown and grey to colour most houses. By painting the façades at the edges of the concentric with a bright orange, he creates a path for the beholder's eye to follow and the scene seems to spin around an axis, almost as if it was sucked in by centrifugal force. This is an effect that Schiele will perfect later in the second painting that shows the same quarter of Krumau: *Krumau Town Crescent II (Island Town)* which is currently stored in the Leopold Museum in Vienna.

## DECAYING MILL (MOUNTAIN MILL)

1916

Oil on canvas

110 x 140 cm

Niederösterreichisches Landesmuseum, St. Pölten

While Schiele completed his military service in this mill town, he completed only two oil paintings. In this one, the decrepit mill is old and collapsing and yet it is also bathed in bright summer light, lending it vigour, warmth and a sense of peace. There is moss on the woodwork, reminding the viewer that water is a powerful natural force. There is a sense of organic order in the dilapidation of a man-made structure which has gone to ruin but in a perfectly natural way. The lower third of the painting, by contrast, suggests a rush of natural force that is able to beat down any man-made obstacle. The violence and shape of the waves is strongly suggestive of the Japanese prints of which Schiele was so fond, while the fact that only two thirds of the canvas is taken up by man-made structures suggests the painter's belief in the tentative grasp of man on his environment.











# DEATH AND MAIDEN (MAN AND GIRL)

1915-1916

Oil on canvas

150 x 180 cm

Österreichische Galerie, Belvedere, Vienna

When Schiele finally decided to marry Edith Harms, he was still seeing his former girlfriend, Valerie Neuzil (Wally). Schiele suggested they continue to meet but Wally rejected this offer and never saw him again. Straight after these life-changing events, Schiele began work on this allegorical masterpiece in which the female figure (Wally) clings grimly to the Death figure that is Schiele. The swirling lines of the muddied colours all drag the figures into the centre of a raging vortex, mirroring their internal turbulence. Everything about them is out of control and wretched. The sheet is crumpled, the hem of the dress is jagged, even the Maiden's arms are weirdly distended and elastic, unable to retain their fragile grasp on her lover. The title naturally makes reference to the eponymous Schubert piece while the foetal, curled up position of the two figures brings to mind the still centre at the eye of a hurricane. They are clinging together desperately before being ripped apart forever.

# PORTRAIT OF AN OLD MAN (JOHANN HARMS)

1916

Oil on canvas

138.4 x 108 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

With this portrait, Schiele creates one of the most touching portraits of his career. The artwork shows his father-in-law. In contrast to previous portraits the model is not surrounded by the characteristic “artistic” emptiness of the unpainted canvas. Nevertheless, the dark room in the background feels small; an effect which is meant to draw the attention of the viewer and to impart him with a dark, heavy dignity. Despite this, he is slumped down on the chair, which seems to be only barely able to support his body.

The only anchoring point for his body is the mighty vertical line, the supporting pillar of the whole painting, which begins at the head of the model and runs through his left arm down to the chair leg. Almost as if Schiele wanted to raise a monument worthy of an ancient philosopher. The vertical pillar line is contrasted or, more accurately, supplemented by a diagonal line that is indicated by the slumped body which seems to be slowly sliding off the chair. This diagonal line is a visual metaphor for the decay of the aging body. The simple composition of lines paired with an interpretation of the posture indicates the resigned tiredness of Harms.

Schiele surprises with an empathy rarely seen in this painting. This new unselfish interest in another person and his lucid and observant rendition of this person are the first steps of the artist towards a new art style; one that would later inspire the artists of the *New Objectivity*.

The colour palette is restricted to muted and more or less saturated shades of grey and brown and thus moves away from Expressionism which relies heavily on colour to visualize emotion. It is astounding how little material Schiele uses to convey this deep sense of empathy with his father-in-law. In painting fewer and fewer self-portraits, Schiele expresses this new sensitivity in different ways, one of them is a series of drawings of Russian prisoners of war.











# PORTRAIT OF HEINRICH BENESCH

1917

Black crayon, watercolours and gouache

45.7 x 28.5 cm

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

Schiele met Chief Inspector Heinrich Benesch very early in his artistic career. During one of the artist's first personal exhibitions in the autumn of 1910, he saw Schiele's *Sonnenblume I* and was so impressed that he demanded to meet the artist personally. As one of Schiele's very first patrons, Benesch was able to compile one of the largest collections of drawings and watercolours from the Austrian artist. Nowadays, the collection is part of the Albertina Collection in Vienna.

In Heinrich Benesch Schiele found a loyal friend whom he was able to convince to pose for portraits several times. However, only a few sketches resulted in fully realized paintings. The double portrait of the year 1913 of Heinrich and his son Otto seems to be one of those few complete paintings. The painting shown here is part of a series of studies that Schiele began in July 1917. Three of those sketches show Benesch's head from different angles while the last focuses completely on his long, angular face. Presumably these paintings served as a composition for a painting that can be seen on the verso of *Krumau Town Crescent III* that is kept in the *Neue Galerie Graz* in Austria.

Although Schiele uses an empty background again, he is still developing his art towards a more realistic and naturalistic style of painting which at the same time is also serene and gentle. Especially if compared with his earlier paintings that feature strongly exaggerated postures and expressions. The painting could also have been commissioned which might present an alternative explanation for the untypical rendition. Schiele might have been restricted in his artistic innovation by the specifications for the portrait. He is using colour only to a very limited degree; mainly to highlight the smallest facets and tiniest shadows in Benesch's face as well as to bring out the details of the character's facial expression. This new usage of colour indicates a vanishing interest in colour itself: here, it is only a means to depict form and depth with an increased acuity. Schiele starts more and more to realize his motives through the drawing itself.

## SEATED WOMAN IN UNDERWEAR, BACK VIEW

1917

Gouache, watercolor and pencil

45.7 x 29.4 cm

Serge Sabarsky Collection, New York

This back view of a sketched and unrobed woman is characterized by aesthetic distortion. Schiele elongates the back of his model that he is painting from a lower-angled bird's eye view. He also exaggerates the elongation of her arms which extends unto the fingers of her left hand. Finally, he creates an imbalance between the breadth of her shoulders and the slimness of her hips. As for the usage of colour, he again makes use of the near transparency, "pseudo-white" of the paper and the ink contours to reveal the silk-like quality of the model's underwear. In the end it is the object of his detailed studies that Schiele is interested in; not the person itself.

This study is part of a series of numerous sketches of women which Schiele drew in the course of the year 1917. Despite the war and the lack of drawing material – Schiele was especially plagued by paper supply problems – he was able to finish no less than 150 studies similar to this one. By 1917, Schiele was no longer the controversial, ill-reputed artist that he used to be. Quite the opposite; the popularity of his art kept on growing and with the new-found financial security, he was able to hire new models. Insofar, there are more new faces and bodies visible in his paintings.

Despite the – still present – naturalistic aspect in Schiele's art, it is difficult to recognize the model's identity. This is why his wife Edith and her sister are often mistaken for each other in Schiele's paintings. The portrayed woman could be Edith but the fact that both sisters have the same hair-do and prefer to wear similar clothing does not alleviate the problem of identification.

In essence, however, the debate between art historians about the identity of the women in Schiele's paintings is irrelevant because Schiele is rather unconcerned about individualising the models in his sketches. Most of them do not have a distinct face or are drawn from back view which serves to study the women from artistic perspective. This particular study is focused on a woman's body and the different, sometimes indignant postures Schiele can force them to assume. Only after they assume the posture which the painter desires he starts drawing them from different angles. This is clearly the case in this painting since its front view is well-known: It is called *Female Torso in Underwear and Black Stockings* and is nowadays kept in a private collection.











## EMBRACE (LOVERS II)

1917

Oil on canvas

100 x 170.2 cm

Österreichische Galerie, Belvedere, Vienna

This is one of Schiele's best known works and a culmination of his new, semi-classical style. The couple lie together, affectionately grasping each other while the artist kisses his wife on the ear. At last, he is able to celebrate a union of two people as one harmonious whole. The lines are smooth; the hair of both heads is joined without distinction; the feet disappear into a single conjoined line. The male and female forms seem to hold each other equally and no one is watching or aware of being watched. The sheet is still crumpled but this is now a modest device to cover the female's genitalia, rather than to expose the brutal animal truth. This is not a pornographic painting but a real image of love. It is as if Schiele is no longer hypnotically enthralled by a juvenile idea of sex and is now focused on actually learning to enjoy his relationship with his wife, Edith. They are two contented people within marriage and, unlike in former works, they are not actually having sex in this picture but are locked in a mutually loving embrace.

## SITTING WOMAN WITH BENT KNEE

1917

Gouache, watercolour and black crayon

46 x 30.5 cm

Národní Galerie, Prague

Formally, this is a new advance in Schiele's technique. He no longer needs to draw strange proportions and novel angles to create effect. His work is simplified and he has become a more mature artist. This is one of the best known of his images from this period and its relative fleshiness, the soft tones of the complementary greens and reds and the ease with which the model sits, all seem to point towards the work of a much more confident man. He no longer needs to shock to create effect – he can return to basic, classical poses and still achieve the desired effect. Here the model sits languidly and may or may not reveal all later. This is not a woman who has madly thrown off her outer clothes at the beginning of the session, but a model who has been deliberately posed and who is quite comfortable to look back at the artist since they are both warm, sentient human beings with individual personalities.











## MOTHER WITH TWO CHILDREN III

1915-1917

Oil on canvas

150 x 160 cm

Österreichische Galerie, Belvedere, Vienna

begun in 1915, though it took two years to complete, this is the final work in a sequence of three images, though this one was radically different from the first two. Schiele's nephew, Toni, was the model for both children, though the naïve colours and decorative style belie the fact that this painting is rather more concerned with the allegorical themes of death and parenthood than with domestic values. The mother figure is a ghostly reminder of human mortality, tentatively holding on to young life. Each of the three figures is cocooned, but the children appear almost like acorns, emerging from a tree of life while the mother is shrouded with only a few segments of vibrant orange peeping from under her gown. The darker child on the left looks inwards and clings to his mother's arm while gesturing as if to pray; the blonder child turns away from the mother figure, looks outwards and hangs his hands towards the floor. This is an exploration of the juxtaposition of life and death and the polarities between these two extremes.

## RECLINING FEMALE NUDE

1917

Gouache, watercolour and charcoal

29.7 x 46.3 cm

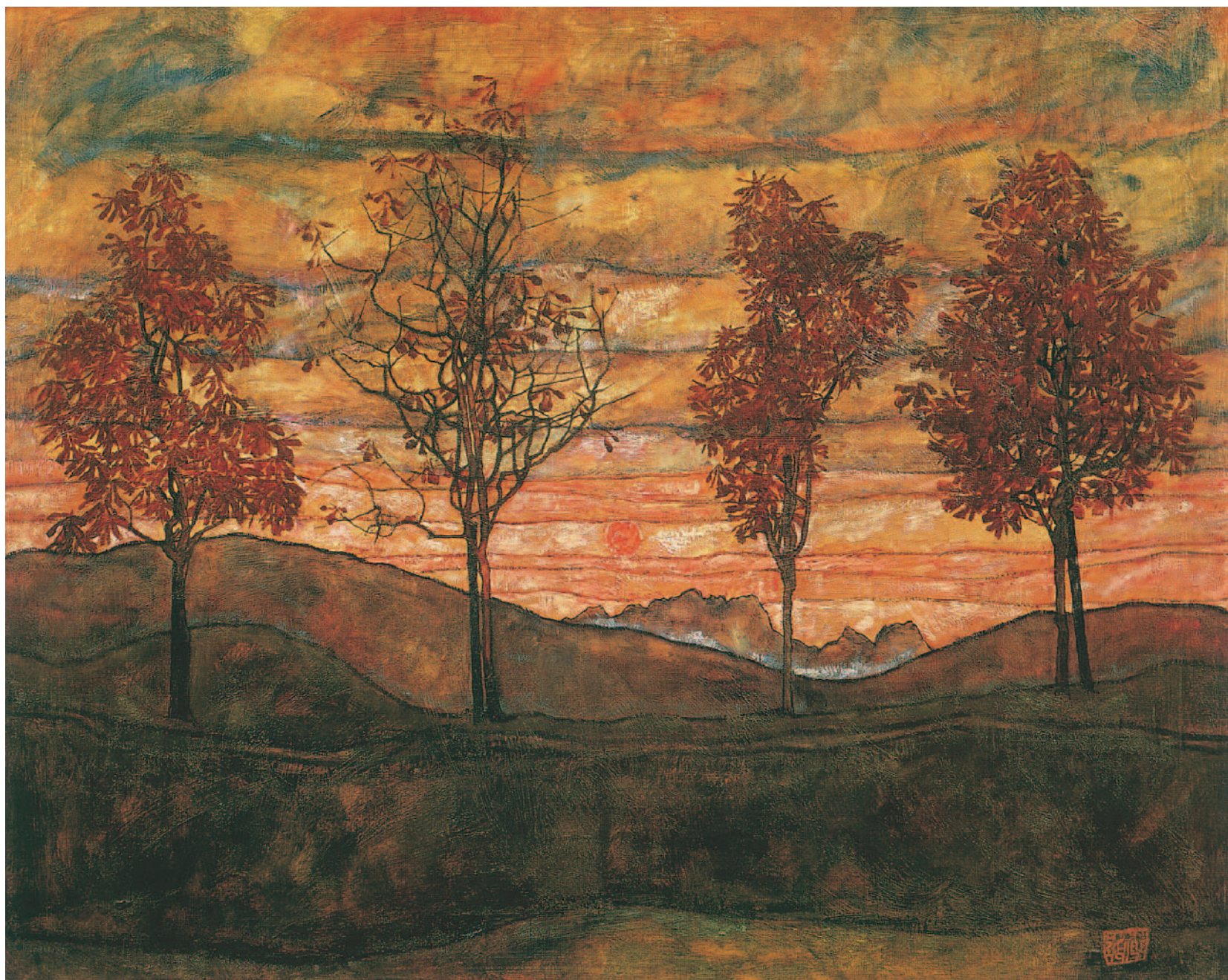
Moravská Gallery, Brno

This is probably a portrait of Adele, Schiele's sister-in-law. She lies provocatively on a bare background, unconnected to her surroundings and clearly sexual though not as coarsely as in much of the artist's earlier work. Schiele was now a happily married man. He enjoyed the physical comforts of the bourgeois life and he appreciated the values of a settled, less impoverished existence. His work began to appear more content, the colours less violent and the eroticism slightly blurred. This model retains her underwear and covers her nipples. The eroticism lies in what remains to be seen rather than what is revealed. One foot, meanwhile, explodes out of the frame, taking the viewer into a real, external world to which Schiele has not often previously referred. The flesh tones are soft and the gaze direct and enquiring. There is a world out there, says the model, and I am confident of my place in it.











# FOUR TREES

1917

Oil on canvas

110.5 x 141 cm

Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna

This painting shows four regularly arranged trees in front of a hilly landscape that is illuminated by the setting sun. Without a doubt, this is the most poetic painting that Schiele ever created. The trees, bathed in the soft light of the sunset, are standing tall and are deeply embedded into the space of the painting. Perspective depth is, on the one hand, created by horizontal layers of sky which fuse heaven and earth together and on the other hand by the intensity of the interplay of lights.

The regularity of the trees is especially peculiar. One could suspect that this arrangement is an allusion to the parallelism that Schiele used in various paintings during the years 1912 and 1913. The strictness of this composition, however, sets it apart from the rest of these works. In contrast to other tree paintings, such as *Setting Sun*, none of the tree branches is cut off at the border. Interestingly, Schiele paints leaves and flowers, which were wildly popular for their decorative value, the same way the other artists of the *Vienna Secession* would but rather uses them in the name of naturalism and authenticity.

Another striking feature is the near lack of foliage on the second tree from the left. This raises the question which season is shown in the painting. The sunset does not give any indication but the symmetrical arrangement of the compositional elements and the already mentioned peculiar foliage-less nature of the second tree strongly imply that the whole landscape is the product of Schiele's rich imagination. The original thought which Schiele wanted to express with this painting is rather opaque and a closer examination of the individual trees might suggest that they are meant to be a symbolic representation of the four seasons. From left to right the single tree could represent autumn, winter, spring and summer. Despite this interpretational ambiguity, the one thing that can be said for certain is, that this painting is unique in Schiele's body of art and reveals a rarely seen poetic and aesthetic side of the artist.

# EDGE OF TOWN (KRUMAU TOWN CRESCENT III)

1917-1918

Oil on canvas

109.5 x 139.5 cm

Neue Galerie, Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz

Schiele was deeply interested in the urban environment as a place of historic community. The image of the old town of Krumau recurs constantly in his work. It very frequently plays a dual role, both as a crumbling ruin and a place teeming with young, vibrant life. This painting was finished at the end of World War I and is the last in a series of portraits of a town which he earlier conceived of as a deathly ruin. Now it is as if the whole place has been reborn. The trees sprout green leaves, the roofs are topped with bright colours and the children throng out into the streets, ready to play. They almost seem, indeed, to be waving at the painter, who observes them from a god-like position on high ground. This is a Lilliputian town with dinky little houses and toy windows, harking back to a pre-industrial age. It might be old and disintegrating, but it is also an aesthetic delight with happy, vibrant citizens painted in warm, natural tones. After the desolation of war, there is organic rebirth.











# PORTRAIT OF THE PAINTER PARIS VON GÜTERSLOH

1918

Oil on canvas

140.3 x 109.9 cm

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis

**A**lbert Paris Gütersloh was a self-taught artist and writer who was also a member of the *Neukunstgruppe*. He probably met Schiele in 1917 and started meeting him regularly from April 1918 onwards. Whether Schiele painted this portrait in the course of one of their meetings is not known.

The preliminary sketches for the painting are especially helpful to understand the concept of this composition. The hieratic posture and symmetry of the body, the determined expression on von Gütersloh's face as well as the particular, yet unrecognizable gesture of his hands are all elements of the composition that are noteworthy. A study of the preliminary sketches reveals that the posture of the sitting model and the unchangeable expression on the face were intentionally chosen from the outset. However, the hand gesture is completely different from the one seen in the finished painting. The sketch *Portrait of the Painter Paris von Gütersloh, without Head* which is kept in the Hans Ankwich-Kleehoven Collection, shows hands that are assuming a gesture remarkably similar to the blessing sign of the cross. In mirrored symmetry, the right hand is blessing the viewer while the left hand is turned towards the artist. Although this gesture of blessing did not make the transition to the actual painting, it still helps to better understand the unusual posture and the piercing gaze of the character. The composition bears similarity to a specific pose meant to convey the impression of power and has been used in art for centuries: from Phidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia over Ingres' *Napoleon on his Imperial Throne* to the figure of God in Van Eyck's *The Lamb of God*. Furthermore, the fiery red background creates the impression that the coloured light is emanating from von Gütersloh himself. The painting itself is more of a stylistic exercise than a homage to the masters of old and might be meant to visually represent the important role Paris von Gütersloh played, together with Schiele and Johannes Fischer, in the organization of the shortlived group which they called "New Viennese Secession" in honour of Gustav Klimt who died in 1918.

## THE FRIENDS (ROUND TABLE), SMALL

1918

Poster for the 49<sup>th</sup> Secession Exhibition

Lithograph, 68 x 53 cm

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

At the 49<sup>th</sup> Secession Exhibition, Schiele showed over 45 pictures and, at last, he achieved national recognition as a master painter. Only a month earlier, in February 1918, the artist's great mentor, Klimt, had died. Of course, this death brought with it an entirely new role for the painter, who quite suddenly found himself the figurehead of an entire artistic movement. For a number of reasons, therefore, Schiele was now on the verge of total financial and social security, and it was in this frame of mind that he painted the poster for the 49<sup>th</sup> Exhibition. Here he sits at the head of a dinner party where all the other guests are his fellow artists and admirers of his work: Georg Merkel, Willi Novak, Felix Harta and possibly Otto Wagner are all happily present, while the foreground chair was originally occupied by an image of Klimt. By the time the poster was due to be printed, however, Klimt was dead and so, in its final version, Schiele left the seat empty. The faces are indistinct and the background anonymous – it is unimportant. The overall impression is one of a group of like-minded people, quite content in each other's company.





# SECESSION 49. AUSSTELLUNG 9-6 IK-

STEINDRUCK ALB. BERGER WIEN VIII.







## THE FAMILY (SQUATTING COUPLE)

1918

Oil on canvas

152.5 x 162.5 cm

Österreichische Galerie, Belvedere, Vienna

The upside-down pyramid pattern in this work suggests an inversion of the normal shape of things, but an apparently quite stable one nonetheless. Despite the new maturity and tranquility evident in this work, the face of the female is not actually that of Schiele's wife, Edith. The space that the male occupies, meanwhile, encloses that of the female which, in turn, encloses the child. Unlike most of Schiele's earlier works, this is a mutually supportive environment. Once again the central image is decontextualised, however, and even now Schiele's interest is in the pure idea of family rather than the place of an identified family in any particular society. Adele, Edith's sister, wrote that the baby in this image had started life as a bouquet of flowers and it is true that the infant's place seems a little awkward, despite his sensitive portrayal. The sense of solidity here recalls similar works by Rodin, and the family seem settled and content in the very centre of the frame, codependent but sufficient for each other's happiness.

# Biography

- 1890: Birth of Egon Schiele in Tulln, Austria.
- 1890-1900: Egon devotes himself to drawing at a very young age, finding his first motifs in his native city and his surroundings.
- 1906: Schiele enters the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts.
- 1907: Meets Gustav Klimt. Klimt influenced Schiele's first works and never ceased to encourage the young artist.
- 1908: Exhibition in Klosterneuburg.
- 1909: Rebels against the teachings of his Academy professor and he writes, along with several colleagues, a list of demands asking for greater freedom of artistic expression. Because of this incident, he is forced to leave the Academy. Schiele then founds the New Art group (Neukunstgruppe) along with artists like Anton Peschka and Hans Massmann. The group will hold their first exhibition at Vienna's Pisko Salon. Thanks to Klimt, Schiele is invited to the prestigious International Exhibition of Vienna.
- 1910: Meets with Arthur Roessler, an art critic who presents Schiele to many collectors.
- 1911: Works in Krumau, Bavaria. He lives with one of his models, Wally Neuzil, and the two offend the morality of the habitants of the small village. He then leaves for Neulengbach before settling down in Vienna in 1912.
- 1912: He exhibits in Budapest with the Neukunstgruppe, and in Munich. Publication of his first lithograph. He is accused of the corruption of a minor and is sentenced to three weeks in prison between March and April: a penalty that profoundly affects him. He then records his bitterness and revolts over his punishment in his *Prison Journal*,



published by Arthur Roessler in 1922. In July, he presents at Cologne's Sonderbund Exhibition, one of the most outstanding events of Austrian Expressionism.

- 1913: He is admitted into the Bund Österreichischer Künstler (a league of Austrian artists), whose president is Gustav Klimt. In March, Schiele and the other artists in the league exhibit in Budapest. He then participates in the spring exhibition at the Munich Secession, at the Grosse Kunstausstellung in Berlin and at the 43<sup>rd</sup> exhibition at the Vienna Secession. He also contributes his writings and drawings to the Berlin review *Die Aktion*.
- 1915: Marriage of Egon Schiele and Edith Harms. The effects of this lifestyle change on Schiele can be seen in his work as his eroticism became less violent. Even though he had escaped from mobilisation, the medical commission returned to its decision and declared him fit for the front. He is drafted into the Austrian army. His artistic production decreased considerably.
- 1916: Schiele exhibits at the Berlin Secession and then at the Munich Secession. *Die Aktion* gives him a special issue.
- 1917: He returns to Vienna where he sat on the Imperial Commission. From now on, Schiele can spend his time focusing on painting. He creates the Kunsthalle, a free association of artists. He participates in an exhibition at Vienna's Kaisergarten and then in various exhibitions in Amsterdam, Stockholm and Copenhagen. Schiele begins to contribute to the new Viennese movement, Der Anbruch.
- 1918: Death of Gustav Klimt on February 6<sup>th</sup>. Schiele's participation in the Viennese Secession is a success for his financial and artistic plans. A number of Viennese personalities are interested in his ever-growing body of work and success. In the fall, his wife contracts the Spanish flu and dies on October 28<sup>th</sup>. Egon Schiele also contracts the virus, follows suit and falls ill, passing away on October 31.

# Index of Works

## A

<i>Agony</i>	125
<i>The Artist's Mother, Sleeping</i>	23
<i>The Artist's Sister-in-Law in Striped Dress, Seated</i>	64
<i>Autumn Sun I (Sunrise)</i>	129
<i>Autumn Trees</i>	118

## B

<i>Blind Mother</i>	146
<i>Boy in Sailor Suit</i>	19
<i>The Brother</i>	20

## C

<i>Cardinal and Nun (Caress)</i>	130
<i>Coitus</i>	161

## D

<i>The Dancer</i>	46
<i>The Dancer Moa, 1911</i>	109
<i>The Dancer Moa, 1912</i>	28
<i>The Dead Mother I</i>	82
<i>Death and Maiden (Man and Girl)</i>	166



<i>Decaying Mill (Mountain Mill)</i>	165
<i>Double Portrait (Chief Inspector Heinrich Benesch and His Son Otto)</i>	142

## **E**

<i>Edge of Town (Krumau Town Crescent III)</i>	185
<i>Egon Schiele (photo)</i>	6
<i>Embrace (Lovers II)</i>	174

## **F**

<i>The Family (Squatting Couple)</i>	190
<i>Female Nude</i>	86
<i>Four Trees</i>	182
<i>The Friends (Round Table), Small</i>	189

## **G**

<i>Grimacing Man (Self-Portrait)</i>	39
<i>Group of Three Girls</i>	106

## **H**

<i>The Hermits</i>	41
<i>Hindering the Artist Is a Crime, It Is Murdering Life in the Bud</i>	126
<i>Holy Family</i>	138

## K

<i>Kneeling Girl in Orange-Red Dress</i>	81
<i>Krumau Town Crescent (The Small City V)</i>	162

## L

<i>Landscape in Lower Austria</i>	36
-----------------------------------	----

## M

<i>Moa</i>	110
<i>Mother and Child</i>	68, 89
<i>Mother with Two Children III</i>	178

## N

<i>Newborn Baby</i>	101
<i>Nude on Her Stomach</i>	29
<i>Nude Self-Portrait, Grimacing</i>	16
<i>Nude with Green Turban</i>	150

## O

<i>Observed in a Dream</i>	113
----------------------------	-----

## P

<i>The Painter Max Oppenheimer, Three-Quarter Length</i>	94
<i>The Poet (Self-Portrait)</i>	102
<i>Portrait of a Woman (Valerie Neuzil)</i>	25



<i>Portrait of an Old Man (Johann Harms)</i>	169
<i>Portrait of Arthur Roessler</i>	30, 97
<i>Portrait of Friederike Maria Beer</i>	154
<i>Portrait of Gerti Schiele</i>	21
<i>Portrait of Heinrich Benesch</i>	170
<i>Portrait of Ida Roessler</i>	137
<i>Portrait of Otto Wagner</i>	74
<i>Portrait of the Artist's Wife, Seated</i>	66
<i>Portrait of the Artist's Wife, Standing</i> <i>(Edith Schiele in Striped Dress)</i>	65
<i>Portrait of the Artist's Wife, with Hands on Hips</i>	63
<i>Portrait of the Painter Anton Peschka</i>	73
<i>Portrait of the Painter Paris von Gütersloh</i>	186
<i>Portrait of the Publisher Eduard Kosmack</i>	93
<i>Portrait of Wally (Valerie Neuzil)</i>	134
<i>Preacher</i>	45
<i>Pregnant Woman and Death (Mother and Death)</i>	38
<i>Procession</i>	121
<i>Prophets (Double Self-Portrait)</i>	122

## **R**

<i>Reclining Female Nude</i>	181
<i>Reclining Girl in a Dark Blue Dress</i>	90
<i>Reclining Nude with Black Stockings</i>	44
<i>Reclining Nude with Legs Spread Apart</i>	58

<i>Reclining Nude with Yellow Towel</i>	60
<i>Reclining Woman</i>	51
<i>Red Nude, Pregnant</i>	24

## S

<i>Schiele Drawing a Nude Model in Front of a Mirror</i>	85
<i>Seated Couple (Egon and Edith Schiele)</i>	54
<i>Seated Female Nude</i>	47
<i>Seated Female Nude, Elbows Resting on Right Knee</i>	145
<i>Seated Female Nude with Raised Right Arm (Gertrude Schiele)</i>	78
<i>Seated Girl</i>	48
<i>Seated Girl, Facing Front</i>	117
<i>Seated Male Nude (Self-Portrait)</i>	98
<i>Seated Nude Girl</i>	77
<i>Seated Woman in Underwear, Back View</i>	173
<i>Seated Woman in Violet Stockings</i>	57
<i>Self-Portrait , 1910</i>	13
<i>Self-Portrait , 1912</i>	11
<i>Self-Portrait as St. Sebastian (Poster)</i>	157
<i>Self-Portrait, Facing Right</i>	14
<i>Self-Portrait, Nude</i>	33
<i>Self-Portrait with Arms Thrust Backwards</i>	22
<i>Self-Portrait with Black Clay Vase and Spread Fingers</i>	9
<i>Self-Portrait with Chinese Lantern Plant</i>	133
<i>Self-Portrait with Hand to Cheek</i>	8
<i>Self-Portrait with Lavender Shirt and Dark Suit, Standing</i>	32



<i>Self-Portrait with Lowered Head</i>	40
<i>Sitting Woman with Bent Knee</i>	177
<i>Standing Girl in Blue Dress and Green Stockings, Back View</i>	49
<i>Standing Male Nude with Red Loincloth</i>	17
<i>Standing Nude Girl</i>	35
<i>Standing Nude with Blue Cloth</i>	55
<i>Sunflower I</i>	70

## **T**

<i>Three Girls</i>	52
<i>The Truth Unveiled</i>	12
<i>Two Girls Embracing (Friends)</i>	42
<i>Two Girls (Lovers), 1911</i>	114
<i>Two Girls (Lovers), 1914</i>	153
<i>Two Girls, Lying Entwined</i>	158
<i>Two Girls on Fringed Blanket</i>	56
<i>Two Little Girls</i>	105

## **V**

<i>Village with Mountains</i>	37
-------------------------------	----

## **W/Y**

<i>Wally in Red Blouse with Raised Knees</i>	26
<i>Woman in Black Stockings (Valerie Neuzil)</i>	141
<i>Woman with Black Stockings</i>	59
<i>Young Mother</i>	149



Egon Schiele (1890-1918) is one of the great Expressionist painters. He was taught by Gustav Klimt, and at a very early age, like his Viennese Secession predecessors, broke with the traditions of official Austrian art. His numerous self-portraits and nude models remained consistent throughout his career in keeping with his erotic, sensual and tormented visions of art. The paintings and text included in this book display the extraordinary talent of this artist who, sadly, died of Spanish influenza at the age of twenty-eight in Vienna.